

SAMOAN CULTURAL VALUES AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT:
An attempt to relate Samoan traditional values
to Christian Understanding

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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David Guffin
Dean

Dedicated to my wife

TUIOLEMATAGI MAKERITA

without whose persistent encouragement
this Dissertation would not have been completed

and

to the memory of my parents

IOFI AFOAFOUVALE LUTU-MOLIO'O

and

AUSIVA LENIU-FAUSIA

whose simple faith has taught me
the fundamentals of Christianity

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ABSTRACT

This project attempts to relate the understanding of human existence in the Samoan cultural setting to Christian faith.

For many years Samoans were given the impression that their values for the most part are primitivistic and unchristian.

Although many Samoans are proud and love their heritage, they are somewhat confused when they try to practice their tradition in a different culture. The critical attitude of their country people and their western neighbors makes them feel their values are inferior and out of touch with the mainstream of life. This attitude is seen even in some areas of Samoa where the influence of the West is quite noticeable.

It is often true that when two cultures clash, adherents of the weaker culture tend to opt for the values of the predominant culture. This is the situation with many Samoans who have moved away from Samoa as well as Samoans who have decided to go back to Samoa after many years living in foreign lands.

This unfortunate situation is not peculiar to Samoa. Other similar cultures have gone through the same experience. Of course there is nothing ethically wrong in adopting values of another culture. However, there is a danger of losing touch with one's own cultural heritage. One will not only lose one's own cultural identity, but also will be unable to make any meaningful contribution to one's newly adopted culture from the heritage upon which one's true identity is based. Hence, cultural enrichment through such contact is lost.

With the inception of space technology, a whole new world of thought-forms and life-styles have made a radical impact upon the traditional, social and religious life of the Samoans. This impact has brought about serious results in the clash between many Samoan traditional values and values of Western societies which some claim are closer to Christian faith.

Noticeable is the clash between the centrality of the "matai" (traditional leader) and individual freedom, between the obligation to the extended family and the needs of the biological family, between the traditional understanding of servanthood (tautua) and the authority of the matai, between collective and individual obligations and between parental authority and children's rights.

My thesis is that Samoan cultural values can be integrated with Christian understanding to help the Samoans affirm the best in their cultural heritage. It will encourage them to make a relevant contribution toward the enrichment of life in communities and churches to which they belong.

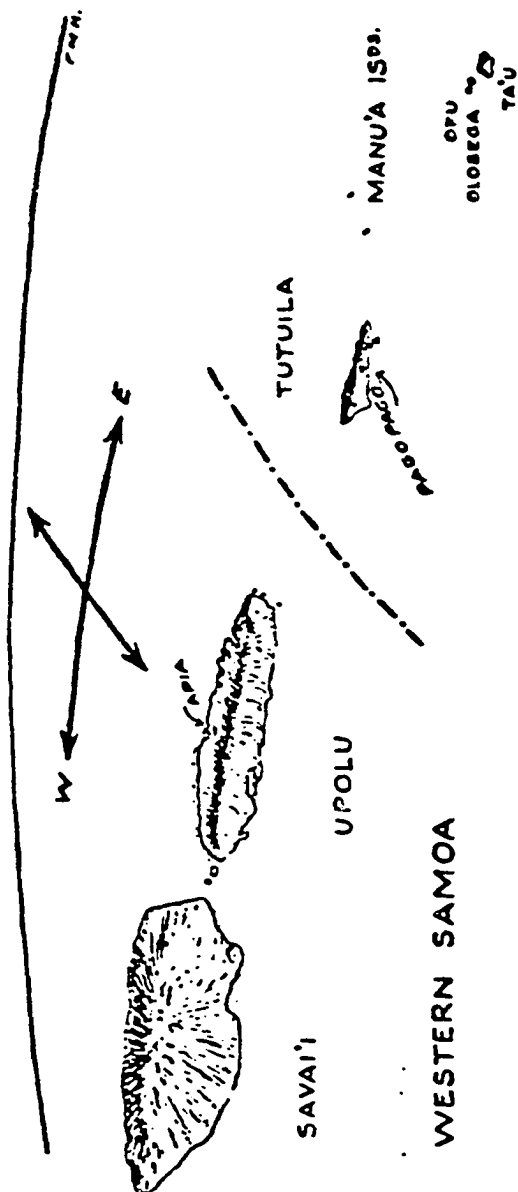
The project does not try to present in a systematic way any comprehensive understanding of Samoan traditional values. It is only an introduction to some of the values Samoans hold dear from their cultural heritage. It is the hope of the author that other Samoans will find these reflections sufficiently stimulating to warrant further investigation into the cultural life of the Samoans.

The materials used in this study are derived from the following sources: (1) From the author's personal knowledge and experience as a native-born Samoan.

(2) From the knowledge and experience of other Samoan leaders in leading positions in Education, Politics, Religion and the everyday practice of the culture.

(3) I was fortunate to find some written materials both published and unpublished in English and Samoan that provided extremely helpful information relevant to the project. These materials are listed in the bibliography.

One of the major problems encountered in the project is the lack of previous work done in this area for comparison and critical evaluation. Thus, the project goes out as the first attempt to relate in a limited way, Samoan Cultural Values to Christian Understanding with the hope that further discussion and dialogue will result that may lead toward a formulation of a Samoan Christian Theology.



AMERICAN SAMOA

NOT SHOWN ARE UNINHABITED ROSE ATOLL TO THE EAST, AND SWAIN'S ISLAND, ADMINISTERED FROM AMERICAN SAMOA, TO THE NORTH.

SAMOAN ISLANDS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY DESCRIPTION

In the western Pacific Ocean, between 13° and 14° south of the equator, and between 168° and 173° west of Greenwich, lie the beautiful and exotic volcanic islands known as the Samoan Archipelago.

Spreading along the east-west axis of the archipelago at a distance of approximately 225 nautical miles¹ are nine main islands--Ta'u, Olosega, Ofu, Aunu'u, Tutuila, Upolu, Manono, Apolima and Savai'i.

The first five are possessions of the United States of America, hence called American Samoa. These islands are presently under the administration of the Department of the Interior. It has what is called an Unincorporated-Unorganized form of government. However, it has a legislative body with the governor appointed by the people as its executive officer.

The last four islands form the Government of Western Samoa, an independent sovereign state established in 1962 under the auspices of the United Nations. Its government is patterned after the British system with the Head of State chosen from the traditional paramount royal families of Samoa and an elected Prime Minister.

¹R. P. Gilson, Samoa 1830-1900. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 1

Although Samoa is divided politically into two different forms of government,² its culture, customs and language are the same.

The Samoans believe they all have the same origin and belong to the same family. Of course, each has its own version of this origin. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

Contrary to the theories of many ethnologists that the ancestors of the Polynesians, a group to which the Samoans belong, came either from somewhere in the Persian Gulf, Southern Arabia or South-East Asia,³ the Samoans themselves firmly believe they were originated in their homeland Samoa. Their customs, culture and language were all part and parcel of their own history that begins in Samoa, which they claim to be the cradle of Polynesia.

The history of Samoa is divided by some traditionalists into four main periods. The period of the gods and semi-divine beings, the period of the heroes, the period of the church and western imperialism and the modern period.

Since this study deals primarily with Samoan cultural values and the ways these values affect the ministry of the church both in Samoa and abroad, it is therefore, important that we understand some of the background of these customs the Samoans value and the period from which they come. For instance, why do the Samoans value the authority of their "aliis" (traditional leaders), their extended family system,

²It is western imperialism of the early 19th century that separated Samoa into east and west under the United States and Germany.

³History of Samoa from 400-1900 (unpublished materials)

their communal land ownership, their "tamasā" (sacred son/daughter), their fine mats, and their mutual supportive system?

In the following chapter, we find that most of these customs have their origin in prehistoric times, in the periods of the gods and semi-divine beings. Like the Greeks with their myths of gods, goddesses and heroes, Samoa also has its own myths for which many of its present cultural practices originate.

Furthermore, these myths are valuable for they point out some very significant theological concepts of how the early Samoans came to view God, nature and man.

Although some of these creation myths do not resemble the Biblical account of creation, yet, they are important in that they interpret how the Samoans relate themselves to the reality of their own environment.

CHAPTER II

MYTHOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS

1. How Things Began

In Samoan mythology, there are different versions of creation--the origin of the first human being and the origin of the name Samoa. Each island has its own tale, and these tales are usually told in the setting that best traces the genealogies of their most prominent leaders. Hence, there are seven paramount titles of Samoa--Tui-Manu'a¹ of the Manu'a islands, Tui-Atua,² Malietoa,³ and Tui-Aana⁴ of the islands of Upolu, Manono, Apolima and part of the big island of Savai'i, and the titles⁵ Tonumaipe'a, Tagaloa and Lilomaiava of Savai'i. There

¹See discussion on pages 7 & 8

²The paramount lord of the territory of Atua in the eastern part of Upolu. The title is also known as "papā-tane" (male titular crown).

³A compound word, "malie" meaning excellent, outstanding; "toa," meaning heroic, valiant. The word was coined by King Talafaifaiki of Tonga to express his admiration and respect for the heroes of Samoa, Tuna and Fata, who led the battle that drove the Tongans out of Samoa around 1250. The word is transliterated "excellent hero, excellent fighter," which carries the meaning, "your fearlessness is something to behold and admire."

The Malietoa title is the holder of two female titular crowns, Gatoaitele and Tamasoaalii of the Tuamasaga, the central territory of Upolu.

⁴The paramount lord of the territory of Aana, the western part of Upolu. The title is also known as "papā-tane."

⁵These are called "Ao," a chiefly term for head. They are prominent titles of the island of Savai'i. They are not in the same category as Tui-Manu'a, Gatoaitele, Tamasoaalii, Tui-Atua and Tui-Aana.

is another paramount title "Tupua" of the royal family of Sa Tupuā, however, its genealogy is traced to the intermarriage among the lineages of three prominent titles of Upolu, Tui-Atua, Malietoa and Tui-Aana.

The following creation stories are from the ancient traditions of Manu'a, the group of islands in the eastern-most end of Samoa. The traditions of Manu'a are generally accepted by the Samoans as the most authentic and ancient depositories of Samoan mythology. These oral traditions have been secretly kept by certain ranking families of Manu'a in loyalty to the strict instructions of their ancient leaders not to divulge any of this ancient lore. One of the reasons for this secrecy is to prevent people from becoming too arrogant and self-centered when they learn of their families' genealogies. Furthermore, it may lead to severe conflict and disharmony between families and communities.

However, the present generation of Manuans are pretty sensitive to the fact that other traditions are beginning to claim primacy and authenticity over theirs. This concern has led them to reveal some of their ancient lore regarding the origin of Samoa, its people and its traditions.

2. Origin of the first human being

"Tupufia" meaning three-king, is another name for the supreme god. He is one person with three names. The names describe his functions within the godhead. The names are Tagaloa-lagi (Boundless heaven), creator of space and the heavenly bodies, the planets, sun,

moon and stars; Tagaloa-mana (Boundless power), creator of the fish of the sea and darkness; and Tagaloa-faatupunu'u (Boundless islandbuilder), creator of dry land, water, birds and beasts. However, it is in the creation of the first human being that all three members of the godhead collaborated.

Hence, each Tagaloa took a "ma'aola" (live stone) and a "ma'a'ele" (clay stone) and began rubbing. Soon the pulverized stones formed a huge mound that finally flattened under its own weight. Tagaloa-faatupunu'u (Boundless islandbuilder), whose responsibility was to design the shape of the first human being lay down on top of the flattened mound, thereby leaving the imprint of his form. Tagaloa-mana (Boundless power), whose work was to give life to the human being, prayed over the imprint, thus creating a living person. Tagaloa-lagi (Boundless heaven), the creator of the cosmos, infused a higher form of life into the human being, thus, setting him apart from other forms of life. Tupufia (Three-king) named the first human being "Ele'ele" (Earth).

After many days, Tupufia decided to create another human being. He then took the heart of the "manu" (bird or beast), mashed it and mixed it with pulverized stones, thus creating the second human being. Tupufia named this human being "Fatu" (Heart). And according to the story, Earth married Heart.

In ancient times, the female sought marriage, not the male. This practice took its origin from the marriage of Earth (female) to Heart (male). However, in later practice, the male seemed to take the initiative, since the male's name is often recorded first in many

genealogical recordings.

Earth and Heart had two sets of fraternal twins--Malae (Center) and Tele (Many), Ao (Day) and Po (Night). Malae married his twin sister Tele and their descendants were the ancestors of all the islands of Samoa. Day married his twin sister Night and for many years were without a child. Tupufia, the supreme deity, then promised them a son who would receive the distinction of the gods. The child was later known as King Aoe'e (see discussion under the origin of the first Tui).

3. Origin of the first "Tui"

The word "Tui"⁶ means the sharpest point, the edge that stands out. It is a reference to the highest ali'i (lord) that stands out above all others.

The first Tui was Tui-Manu'a of the Manu'a islands comprised of Ta'u, Olosega and Ofu. According to an ancient myth, Tui-Manu'a was the son of Day and Night, children of the first woman and man, Earth and Heart.

Before Night gave birth to her first child, Tupufia, the supreme deity, announced to the parents to name their baby "Aoe'e." The literal translation of Aoe'e is crown-conferred or bestowed-honor. The child was destined to receive the honors and dignities of the godhead (Tagaloa-lagi, Tagaloa-mana, and Tagaloa-faatupunu'u).

⁶Manu'a has a tradition that the title "Tui" originated with them and later spread to other islands of the Pacific. Through many years of contact, heroes from other islands came to challenge the mana (power) of the Tui-Manu'a either by open battle or in the contest of the ancient art of riddle-guessing. Manu'a claimed that the power of Tui-Manu'a had never been defeated by his challengers.

When the mother was about to give birth, complications set in and the child was stuck to her womb. There was great anxiety and confusion in the family. They thought mother and baby were going to die. The troubled and concerned midwives encouraged her to push harder, thus causing the expulsion of the baby. The worried midwives were not prepared to receive the newborn and he accidentally landed on the floor and was hurt. Hence, the name "Manu'a" (wound) was given to the child in remembrance of the accident during his birth. His proper name was Tui-Manu'a Aoe'e, the last name was a reminder that the child was promised to receive the distinction of the gods. He was also given the nickname "Satailemoa" or "Moa" for short, to suggest that he was stuck to the womb or bosom (moa) of his mother.

The Samoan word for fowl or chicken is "moa." In Manu'a, a fowl or chicken is called "manu" (bird), not moa, because it is the nickname of the king. This is still true today in Manu'a, even though the title "Tui-Manu'a" has not been used since 1909.

4. Origin of the name Samoa

There are different versions of the roots of the name, Samoa. George Turner, missionary to Samoa in the middle of the 17th century, collected different accounts of the origin of the name, mostly from Western Samoa. The following account comes from the traditions of Manu'a.

When the royal family of Tui-Manu'a Moa expanded and multiplied, he called a meeting in which he informed the members of his family of the necessity of moving out to populate outlying islands to prevent

overcrowding. It was also his desire that the islands created by their god Tagaloa-Faatupunu'u be inhabited. Hence, before the family dispersed, Tui-Manu'a gave them the following instructions:

Come now, my children. When you go away, remember, we are all members of one family. We have one language, one custom and one tradition. Should people inquire as to where you come from, tell them that you are members of the Family of Moa.

Thus, the name "Samoa" (Sa-Moā) means, members of the Family of Moa.

Those who left Manu'a were couples "Tutu" and "Ila," "U" and "Polu," "Sa" and "Vi'i." Tutu and Ila inhabited the island of Tutuila, the biggest island of Eastern Samoa. U and Polu were the ancestors of Upolu, while Sa and Vi'i populated Savai'i, the largest island of the Samoan group. Manu'a was left for Tui-Manu'a and the descendants of the three distinguished members of the children of "Malae" and "Tele." They were Pua, Lei and Ite, the original founders of the "Faletolu" (Three Houses of Tui-Manu'a).

Hence, according to the Manu'a tradition, all Samoans come from the original family of Tui-Manu'a. They also claim that the "faatamaali'i"⁷ (honorable practices of the ali'is) stem from the exemplary ways of their prominent ali'i Tui-Manu'a. Tradition says they are the ways of his ancestors the Tagaloas.

According to this tradition, when the dwelling of the Tagaloas was defiled by Lefanoga, the first human being to enter Mt. Lagi,

⁷ The word means "like the father ali'i." The father in Samoan understanding is supposed to exemplify the best qualities in human relationships.

Tagaloa-lagi, supreme deity, devised a scheme to punish Lefanoga. Tagaloa-ui, father of Lefanoga, was terribly annoyed by the plan and secretly revealed the way for his son to save his life. When Lefanoga successfully defended his honor against the wrath of the gods, this led to the dispersal of the Tagaloas from their sacred abode Mt. Lagi, and they became leaders of islands of the Pacific Ocean. However, Tagaloa-lagi (supreme deity) remained in Samoa to instruct its leaders of the "faatamaali'i." The faatamaali'i is Samoa's high culture.

5. Origin of Man (Another Manu'a version)

According to this version, the first human being is the product of the natural process of evolution that begins with the intermarriage between various earthly compounds and matter, rock, clay, sand, earth and thunder. From the intermingling of these forms of matter, comes the 'alu'alutoto (blood clot/embryo). This blood clot was seen floating on the beach by Tagaloa-lagi, the supreme deity of the Samoan pantheon who dwells on Mt. Lagi.⁸

Then Tagaloa instructed his family to nurse the 'alu'alutoto. Hence, they covered it with "fuefue," a vine that grows along the beach.

After some time, Tagaloa called upon the "uga" (certain form of land crab) to strip the 'alu'alutoto of its mucous membrane coating.

⁸It is also called "Mauga-o-ao" (Mt. Clouds). It is a pyramidal hill with ten major terraces called "lagi" (heavens), situated high above the village of Aga'e on the island of Ta'u.

Then he called upon the "tulī" (snipe) to disjoint the embryo to form movable parts of the body, the neck, elbows, waistline and knees. These parts were named after the "tulī," for instance, "tuli-vae" (knee), "tuli-lima" (elbow), "tuli-ua" (neck), "tuli-manava" (waist-line).

After the tulī had performed its critical surgery, Tagaloa-lagi then called upon the "miti" (small bird like the sparrow) to suck the nostrils of the 'alu'alutoto. Thus the 'alu'alutoto became the first human being. Tagaloa-lagi and his family named the first human being "Tagaloa-ui." "Ui" means "to walk." Hence, the first human being, according to this story, is called "Boundless Walker" or the "Walking God."

In other Manu'a versions of this story, it was Tagaloa-lagi himself that created the first human being and Tui-Manu'a was the direct descendant of the Tagaloa family.

6. Origin of Man (Upolu's version)

Siaosi Tana,⁹ in his book, Samoa O Anamua, recorded two versions of the beginning of man from the "fuefue" (creeper). It was fire that married water and gave birth to earth, rock, trees and other living things. Then one of the living things, the nufe'e (squid), rebelled against their parent fire and was subdued. There began a long war in which rock defeated fire, pebbles defeated rock, grass defeated pebbles, trees defeated grass and finally the creeper defeated trees

⁹Siaosi Tana, Samoa O Anamua. (Wellington: Islands Educational Division, 1962), pp. 6-8

and there was peace. Since there was nothing left to defeat, the creeper lay there and rotted and filled with worms. From these worms came the first human being.

According to another myth recorded by George Turner, Tagaloa-lagi (supreme deity) sent his daughter, the messenger goddess, to explore whether there was dry land on earth. Upon arrival she disguised herself as a "tulī" (snipe). She flew around to find a place to rest but the whole earth was totally covered with water. She went back to Mt. Lagī and reported the situation to her father. However, her father urged her to go back to earth. Upon returning the second time she saw on the horizon something that looked like a bundle of waves smashing against rocks; she reported this to her father. On her next trip to earth, she brought a handful of dirt and a "fuefue" (creeper) to be planted on dry ground. The vine started to grow wild but soon withered, rotted and became covered with maggots. When the messenger goddess returned to earth for the last time, the maggots had turned into a man and a woman.

7. Origin of the Royal House of Malietoa

The name "Malietoa" (see discussion on page 4) was originated during the War of Independence of 1250. However, the family had its roots, according to the ancient tradition of Upolu, from the first Tagaloa (supreme deity), creator of the first man. According to this tradition,¹⁰ the first Tagaloa was the son of the Heavens--Cloudless-

¹⁰George Turner, Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before. (London: Macmillan, 1884), pp. 4f

heaven and Spread-out-heaven.

And from the lineage of Tagaloa, the originator of men, came the Great Pili, the famous hero of Upolu and Savai'i. In another tradition, Pili's mother was the daughter of the Tui-Manu'a.

The Great Pili had five children of whom the first three, Saga, Ana and Tua became founders of three main territories of Upolu, namely, Atua, Aana and Tuamasaga.

From the line of Aana were ten generations to the Fe'epō, father of the Great Atiogie. Atiogie had seven children, Savea, Lealali, Tuna, Fata, Ve'atauaia, Leimuli and the girl 'Ati'atigie. Tuna and Fata were heroes that led the War of Independence in 1250 that originated the title "Malietoa." Because of the struggle between the two brothers, Tuna and Fata, both claiming the title, a compromise was reached that their elder brother Savea be the first Malietoa.

In continuance of this genealogy, there followed twenty generations of Malietoas down to Malietoa Talavou, who was proclaimed king in 1878, and subsequently recognized by the Governments of England, Germany and the United States.¹¹

The present Head of State of the Government of Western Samoa, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili Aki II, is a direct descendant of Malietoa Laupepa, the son of Malietoa Talavou.

8. Origin of Feagaiga Paia (Sacred Covenant)

The sacred covenant, which is the covenant relationship between

¹¹Ibid., p. 5

the brother and sister, is something very unique and important in Samoan culture. In this relationship, the sister occupies a very special place in the family circle. She is addressed as "i'oimata o le tuagane" (apple of brother's eye), "tamasā" (sacred child), "seetalā-luma" (one who occupies the front seat), or "tama-faaolioli" (child who is the pride of the family).

The brother's responsibility is to serve and cater to the needs of his sister and to protect her with his life. All heavy responsibilities are upon his shoulders for the care and support of the sister. Samoans have a saying, "E mu mata o le tuagane i le tuaafine" (the brother's face is burned because of his faithful service to his sister).

This is a reference to the Samoan way of preparing food from the outdoor oven. The brother has a deep respect for his sister and the sister returns this with her deep love and care for her brother. In their home the brother is tabooed to enter the section of the house occupied by his sisters.

Since the brother is the stronger sex, he is given the right to hold the title and be the chief administrator and guardian of the family. The sister, being the weaker sex, is free to do what she wants and her desires are always respected by her brothers. She, by tradition, possesses the power to curse the brother and his children if he does not perform his duties according to the established tradition of the family.

The origin of the sacred-covenant, according to a legend from Manu'a, goes back to the family of Sa Tagaloa. Tagaloa-Tufuga (master architect of the gods) is a member of the inner circle of Tagaloa-lagi,

the supreme deity. He is known as "agai-o-tupu" (one who sits opposite the king), a chiefly term to address any master-builder and his assistants in the Samoan construction guilds. The sons of Tagaloa-Tufuga by trade are master builders.

When the sacred family of Tagaloas was about to leave Mt. Lagi, the master builder called his sons and gave them his parting words.

"My children, you are going to be master craftsmen of all the islands of the great ocean. Remember my daughter Sina, your only sister. She has no special skill. Whenever one of you completes his work, bring a basket of his reward and spill a little before her, that she may give her blessings upon your labors."

These parting words of Tagaloa-Tufuga formed the basis of the sacred covenant between brother and sister that is still honored in Samoan society today.

It is unfortunate that western culture has so influenced many Samoan families that this ancient practice is no longer part of their lifestyle.

9. The Structure of the Samoan family.

According to an ancient myth from Manu'a, the structure of the Samoan family was patterned after the structure of the Sacred family of the Tagaloas. As already pointed out, the Tagaloas dwell on Mt. Lagi, a ten tier terrace-like hill. According to the myth, different Tagaloas occupy each of the ten terraces, depending on each one's function and status within the pantheon. These terraces are called "lagi" (heavens). The top heaven is the abode of the supreme deity.

However, the level of each terrace is different depending on the status of the hierarchy occupied by the Tagaloa. All Tagaloas are called "matais" or aliis."

Thus, in the structure of the Samoan family, there are also different "matais" occupying different levels of the family's hierarchy with the leading matai on top. This organizational structure is also true in the village. In a Samoan village, especially one that takes its tradition seriously, you can readily tell the house of the leading ranking alii by the number of terraces it has. This is also true with the elevation of his tomb. However, in private properties where individuals are free to build the kind of dwelling each one prefers, this arrangement is not true.

In the foregoing chapter, I discussed some of the myths which have been the background of some of the cultural values of the Samoans. In the following chapter, we shall turn to analyses of some of the basic structures of the Samoan Way of Life.

CHAPTER III

BASIC STRUCTURES OF SAMOAN LIFE

A. INTRODUCTION

There are three fundamental institutions that form the basic structure of the Samoan Way of Life (Faasamoa). They are the "Pulega Faamatai" (Authority of Titleholders), the "Aiga Popotopo" (Extended Family) and "Fanua Eleele Umia Faitele" (Communal Land Ownership). These primary elements of Samoan cultural and social life, however, are mutually bound to each other like three sides of a triangle. The breakdown of one will seriously impair the effectiveness of the others and could ultimately lead to the collapse of the system as a whole.

Without the titleholder, there is no central authority to keep the large extended family together and its customary lands under one management. Without the extended family, the titleholder has no basis for his authority, support and recognition in the larger community. Without the communal land ownership system, both titleholder and extended family complex have neither means of physical existence nor a particular place of identification in which the title is situated and its status fixed within the matrix of its residential community.

Because of the significance of these institutions in Samoan culture, the Legal System of Samoa has created a special department to deal primarily with land title issues.

In this chapter, I shall try to point out the structure and function of these basic institutions as they affect the nature of

Samoa social, economic, cultural and religious life.

B. THE TITLEHOLDER (MATAI)

1. Meaning and Origin

The term "matai" often translated "chief" is a untranslatable word. It comes from the word "ma-ta'i." It means to observe or to watch with care. The word carries the meaning of an observation that is sharp and discerning. Hence, "matai" is the person appointed to oversee and watch with care the affairs of the family. When translators of the bible were looking for a word to translate "master" into Samoan, they used the word matai.

As already pointed out in the previous chapter, the word has a close relationship with the sacred family of the Tagaloas, who dwelt on their elevated heavens and could see what was happening on earth.

In a Samoan village, the matai usually lives in an elevated fale (house), depending the status of his title, apart from the rest of the family. From that elevated position he has an unobstructed view of his family.

2. Status and Authority

The matai is the central figure around which the whole extended family rallies. In ancient Samoa, he was their earthly lord, mediator, healer, savior and priest.

Even today, the Samoans believe matais are lords appointed by God to rule their World.

In one of their popular songs is the following verse:

Ua tofia e le Atua Samoa
 Ina ia pulea e matai
 Auā o Lona mamalu
 Ua vaelua i ai

God ordained Samoa
 To be governed by matais
 For His eminence
 Is equally shared with them

This is, of course, a very interesting notion that certainly has good theology to support it. In the Old Testament, kings are earthly lords, but they are called sons of God. They are appointed by God to rule and lead his people for Him. Thus, matais in the Samoan tradition occupy such important offices as administrators, guardians and good stewards of their extended families under God's rule. Since the ranking matai is the top person in the family's echelon, he is also their high priest.¹ He is considered the representative of the gods among human beings.

Hence, when the first missionaries arrived in Savai'i, the largest island in the Samoan archipelago in 1830, it was not difficult for traditional leaders to make the transition of the honor and distinction reserved for the "aliis" to the missionaries and ministers. The Samoans believed ministers to be representatives or high priests

¹ The matai as high priest offers a short prayer before evening meals. He leads family worship and in these gatherings, he pours a little from his kava cup (ceremonial drink of the aliis' made of the root of the pepper plant dried and pounded to powdery form), and offers a prayer to the family gods for their protection from punishment, disease, war and death. He is also the medium into which the family god enters to make his will known to the people.

of the most powerful and benevolent god the white men brought with them when they landed on their shores.

Thus, before King Malietoa Vaiinupo Tavita,² the last of the "Tafa'ifas"³ passed away, he left a mavaega⁴ (parting will) which, ever since, has elevated and honored all ministers of God to the level comparable to aliis. This is a tremendous privilege, for ministers are untitled, status-less persons, yet, they are treated as paramount lords and enjoy a unique place of honor in Samoan society.

King Malietoa Vaiinupo's faalupega (honorific address) is "Susuga i le Tapa'au Faasisina." The term "susuga" is the official term with which ministers are addressed in formal or informal occasions, an honor they have received from King Malietoa.

In almost all Samoan villages, the residence of the minister is the most conspicuous structure next to the church sanctuary. He is the best fed and most cared for person in the whole community. And in many villages the highest paid employee. He also receives the choicest portions of village distributions in food and Samoan wealth. These are the honors reserved for the aliis now being given to the ministers as representatives of God. The Samoans believe in rendering the highest

²King Malietoa Vaiinupo Tavita received the first missionaries Williams and Barff. The name "Tavita" (David) was his christian name given by the missionaries when he accepted christianity.

³The holder of the four most prominent titles of Western Samoa, Tui-Atua, Tui-Aana, Gatoaitale and Tamasoalii. See discussion on page 4.

⁴"There will be no more Tafa'ifa, I am entering the earth with all the dignity and glory of Samoa. All her honors are now upon your new kingdom, Christianity, and her representatives, the ministers of God."

quality service to God, the Alii of aliis, and ministers are His earthly ambassadors.

Although ministers are now sharing in the privileges of the matais, the status and authority of the latter in the family, village or the larger community remain the same. The matai is still the important symbol of the unity and loyalty within the Samoan Way of Life.

3. Types of Matai

There are three major categories of titleholders. The matai-ali'i (popularly known as chief), the "matai-tulafale" (orator or spokesman for the ali'i), and the "tulafale-ali'i" (orator-chief). These three are further categorized into two or six other groupings depending on how one classifies these titles.

The functions and responsibilities of these different categories of titleholders are clearly defined within the family setting and within the structure of the village, district and territory to which they belong. However, their roles are not that sacredly fixed. A well educated and sophisticated lower ranking orator can perform the role of the higher ranking orator in situations where the latter is not available or feels inadequate to match the dignity of the occasion where the high culture of Samoa is being performed.

For a better understanding of the three major groups of titleholders, see the following list.

a. Matai-Alii (Chiefs)

1. Ali'ita'i o motu (Paramount lords of islands)
2. Ali'isili o vaega o motu (Prominent lords of islands)

3. Ali'isili o itumalo (High ranking chiefs of districts)
4. Ali'isili o nu'u (High ranking chiefs of villages)
5. Ali'isili o aiga (High ranking chiefs of families)
6. Ali'i o aiga (Ranking chiefs of families)
7. Ali'i faavaipou o aiga (Common family chiefs)

b. Matai-Tulafale (Orators)

1. Tulafalesili o motu (High ranking orators of islands)
2. Tulafalesili o teritori (High ranking orators of territories)
3. Tulafalesili o itumalo (High ranking orators of districts)
4. Tulafalesili o nu'u (High ranking orators of villages)
5. Tulafalesili o aiga (High ranking orators of families)
6. Tulafale faitauina o aiga (Ranking orators of families)
7. Tulafale faavaipou o aiga (Lower orators of families)

c. Matai Tulafale-Alii (Orator-chiefs)

1. Tulafale-ali'i o motu (Orator-chiefs of islands)
2. Tulafale-ali'i o itumalo (Orator-chiefs of districts)

The above groups of titleholders comprised one of the major institutions that govern the Samoan Way of Life which is known as the "Pulega faamatai" (Authority of Titleholders).

4. How One Becomes a Matai

A person is installed as a matai through a unanimous agreement of the extended family, a personal choice of the leading matai if such decision is not contested by any member of the family, or through a court ruling in cases where the family is unable to reach a peaceful

settlement. The latter usually happens to important titles whose influence and authority go far beyond village and district bounds, an area, for example, that might be compared to city and state levels.

Finally, there is the "mavaega" last parting words of a dying leader. In the old days this was very important and it is still recognized in some areas of Samoa. There was no consideration of the title without first consulting whether there was a mavaega. This practice is generally not taken too seriously by many families today. The matai's parting words usually express his desire as to whom his successor should be, and in most cases it is one of his sons. Hence, senior members of the family counsel the dying person not to burden his mind with mundane and worldly matters such as family titles, but to concentrate on heavenly things and to prepare his soul for the ultimate encounter with the Lord.

There is a legitimate reason why the family has not given much attention to the parting words of their dying matai. The present-day extended family has grown very large and widespread with its complex system of lineages that includes an intricate network of affines--all of whom have lawful claims to the title. Hence, it is only fair that other capable and competent members of the family be considered rather than the title being stereotyped in the father-son relationship as in the case of the mavaega. This is one of the many examples of the flexibility of the culture and its ability to accommodate emerging needs in Samoan society.

5. Eligibility

Consideration of regular candidates for the matai title is based upon birthright or blood relations, service, lineage connection of previous ancestors, economic security and competency in Samoan culture. Traditionally speaking, only heirs of the lineage of "tama-tane" (descendants of male members) are considered proper aspirants to the title. Heirs of "tama-fafine" (descendants of female members) are considered only when there is no qualified candidate found from the lineage of "tama-tane." This practice has its roots in the sacred covenant between brother and sister as discussed in Chapter II. This sacred relationship reveals the way ancient Samoa places high premium upon the status of their women. I wish to point out here that two of the highest royal titles of Samoa are derived from women--the Gato'aitele and Tamasoāalii. (see p.4).

However, the practice of present day Samoa has not given strong recognition to the special rights of "tama-tane."⁵ Many "tama-fafine" have contested the claims of the "tama-tane" and have been awarded the decision of the court. This does not mean the traditional relationship between "tama-tane" and "tama-fafine" has been dissolved. Both descent groups are considered equally with respect only to proper eligibility to the title.

Perhaps one of the reasons for disregarding the traditional rights of "tama-tane" is the compulsion to find the best possible leader available to represent the family in modern day progressive society.

⁵ See discussion on pp. 14f

6. Admirable Qualities

As pointed out elsewhere, the "matai" is the central figure around which the extended family oscillates. It is, therefore, very crucial that the right person be found to be its chief administrator. The selection of such a leader is not always easy. It takes time, for election is not done through balloting with one-man-one-vote, but through a long and tedious traditional process with one-man-one-speech or more privileges. It sometimes takes months, even years, to reach an agreement. The rationale for this kind of procedure is to have each "falealo/faletama" (descent group) voice its opinion, judgment, insight and evaluation of its favorite candidate in the hope that out of these sharings a unanimous agreement can be reached. The thing that is uppermost in the minds of the Samoans in these deliberations is the cohesiveness and harmony of the family. They firmly believe in a united family standing behind its chosen leader. Many competent and capable members yield their bids for the leading title in order to keep the family intact.

In spite of the efforts of senior members to negotiate a peaceful settlement in the traditional way, there are families which have been led by the competitive spirit of modern society together with the desire for power to disregard the traditional principle of "vafealo-aloa'i" (regard for personal relationship), and bull-headedly to argue that the modern court of law should settle their case. Unfortunately, many families have been hurt by taking their case to court. Complaints have been lodged that persons without blood relations or any legal

rights whatsoever have been awarded such important family titles. Villages like Pata in Western Samoa, Fagasā, Alao and Pava'ia'i of American Samoa have reported such cases. Modern courts of law have devised certain procedural guidelines in conformity with Samoan customs, but sophisticated counsels, for some strange reason, have been able to convince the court of the strength and legitimacy of their erroneous arguments. This has been as a poisoned dagger that has been stuck in the heart of the family and destroyed the spirit of harmony and unity.

In any consideration for the matai title, a blood relationship is very vital, especially continuing service of heirs of the same lineage. Present day families are extremely sensitive in protecting the leading title from falling into the hands of members⁶ who are not legitimate heirs, unless in exceptional cases where unanimous agreement is granted.

One of the most admirable qualities in any discussion for the leading title is "tautua"⁷ (service/servant). Samoans have a saying,

⁶In any Samoan family, there are always unrelated people from other villages or islands that have been accepted as members through the Samoan spirit of "alofa" (love). Since they live on family communal land, they are obligated to the extended-family and subject to the authority of the leading matai. Through their loyal services, many have been rewarded and elevated to become matais of lesser status in these families. However, some have been very successful educationally, economically and professionally. Rather than being satisfied with the recognition they have received, they have tried their luck by forcing their way into leading positions without family consensus. Unfortunately, this is something new which is a direct result of western influence on Samoan culture.

⁷Tau-tua, "tau" means "to fight" and "tua" means "back" or "behind." The word also means "to follow from behind." A good and faithful servant always follows behind his master to serve and protect him with his life.

"O le ala i le pule o le tautua" (The way to authority is through service). Samoan history is full of evidence of individuals, families, and villages receiving outstanding merits of honor through faithful service. To name a few, the leading title of the island of Olosega and its honorific address "Tuiolosega ma le malelega," was gained through Olosega's loyal service to Tui-Manu'a, king of Manu'a. "Aiga Salevalasi," one of the leading families of Samoa and protector of the royal title "Tui-Atua" was granted to the villages of Fagaloa, Amaile, Lepa and Lotofaga because of their faithful service to Lady Levalasi, wife of Tui-Atua Mata'utia Faatulou, king of Atua. "Vaa-o-Fonoti" (War-boat-of-Fonoti) is a ranking position of honor granted to leading orators of the villages of Fagaloa and Faleapuna because of their outstanding service in defense of King Fonoti. The land of the village of "Salelesi" in the eastern part of Upolu was granted to "Sa" and "Lesi," Tongan servants as a reward for their dedicated service to King Tui-Atua Mata'utia Faatulou and his wife Lady Levalasi. These are but a few illustrations of how good and faithful services are rewarded in Samoan culture regardless of position and status in life. And awarding of the matai title as a compensation for such services is not exceptional.

Another amiable quality greatly appreciated by the family is "mataalofa" (kind eyes) and "usiaiga" (family-caring). The kind eyed person cares deeply for the welfare and unity of the family. His concern is not limited to his close kin or descent group, but extends to all his relatives, including those living outside the confines of the family proper, even as far as New Zealand and the United States. Such

a person can never save anything. His savings are used through caring and sharing with his family. It seems giving is his life's sustenance. He feels uncomfortable and depressed if unable to give. He believes strongly in a Samoan saying, "E tupu mea-'avea" (There is multiplicity through giving). Samoans believe you gain more by giving. Hence, when a Samoan gives it is not just a token. It is the best out of the fullness of the joyous heart. Samoans feel ashamed to give something that is below the dignity of the person who is to receive the gift or to be entertained. They will say to whomever they are giving, "Na o manava o mailē fia maua ni mea se tele..." (Our guts cry out had we have more to give...). It is literally true if a Samoan had a million dollars, he would share all with his closest kin, relatives, friends and even strangers.

Samoans may never be successful business people in the American sense,⁸ for it is not within their nature to save or hoard their wealth. To them, wealth is meant to be shared and used for the maintenance of their cultural obligations. This is what a good and happy life is to a Samoan who loves his traditions. Take, for instance, the most valuable item of wealth in Samoan culture, the "ie-toga."⁹ Some of

⁸ Architect Folasāaitu Meki John Lee-Iō, high ranking alii of Fugalei, Western Samoa, had a small grocery store next to his home. One of his closest friends from Hawaii commented that his business would never make any profit because he refused to let his guests pay for items they wished to buy. His reply was that the purpose of the store was to feed the family and maintain their extended-family's obligations.

⁹ The word literally means "material-from-Tonga" known as fine-mat. Some of these fine-mats are over 500 years old. They are woven from the bark of the lau'ie plant finely stripped to one-sixteenth of an inch. See also footnote on page 32.

these are priceless because of age, quality and origin. Yet, the Samoans will give them away at some very unique occasion when the heart is deeply moved to do the best. They believe that when they share that priceless "ie-toga," another one of the same quality and value will come to take its place. When you do your best for others, others will do their very best for you. This is the beauty of giving and sharing in Samoan culture. Eric Fromm, in his book, The Art of Loving,¹⁰ speaks of mature love as a reciprocative relationship.

When a Samoan saves, it is for entertaining others. A family raises plantations of taros, bananas, or livestock such as pigs, chickens, and cattle to provide the best for their cultural and extended-family obligations. Their everyday consumption is very meager and may consist of "faalifu" (boiled bananas, taros, breadfruits or yams cooked with coconut milk) for the whole week except Sunday. On Sunday they will have something extra like meat, poultry or canned corned beef. But when guests are entertained, you will notice all kinds of dishes--Samoan, European and Oriental. Visitors are quite impressed that Samoans can afford to provide such lavish and sumptuous meals. But it is the Samoan spirit of giving in order to do the best for others.

One other quality that needs mentioning is fairness and impartiality. The Samoans call it "faimeatonu/faimeasa'o" (doing what is right and just). These are admirable qualities any family would pray their leaders could possess.

¹⁰Eric Fromm, The Art of Loving. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 30

7. Responsibilities

The matai is the trustee of family property, land and titles. Family land cannot be sold or given away without the approval of the matai or the agreement of the family. As recorded by Captain Gray, "for although land cannot be sold without his consent, he cannot dispose of family land without the consent of the family."¹¹ This is also true with titles. He must seek the approval of his associates--other matais under his authority--and senior members of his family. He apportions parts of family land for members to build homes and cultivate for plantations. He looks after family wealth and valuables and is responsible for keeping the family's genealogy and history.

Besides his trusteeship role, he also plays a very vital function as mediator. The Samoans recognized¹² very early that such anti-social acts as murder, assault, adultery and malicious mischief were detrimental to the harmony of the family and society. Hence, they developed legislation to control this offensive behaviour. However, in crimes of a very serious nature such as murder and adultery committed with the wife of a ranking alii (solitofaga) that might lead to mass murder and war, the mediatorial role of the leading matai is of extreme importance.

As a mediator, he seeks restitution with the offended family by

¹¹J. A. C. Gray, Amerika Samoa. (Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1960), p. 21

¹²Ibid., p. 27

performing the traditional "ifoga"¹³ (public apology of extreme humiliation). He heads a contingent of ranking matais and senior members of his family to the house of the leading matai of the offended family. They sit outside. They wait in silence with fear and trembling, hoping and praying that revenge will not be executed against them. This waiting may take from one to six hours or more, depending on how long it takes the offended family to reach unanimous agreement regarding acceptance or rejection of the ifoga. All the members of the family

¹³ The latest case of an ifoga was reported in Santa Ana on October, 1977. A young man from the village of Fagasā, American Samoa, killed his wife and seriously wounded his sister-in-law who came to her assistance. Ministers and matais of the young man's family knew of the gravity of the situation and contacted their family in Samoa to perform the ifoga there while they did the same here. At 4:00 a.m. on a very cold morning, twenty people all covered with "ietoga" sat in front of the offended family's house in Santa Ana. The Santa Ana Police Department was alerted and briefed. From 4:00 a.m. till 9:30 a.m., they waited in silence without anybody moving before they were accepted into the house. The family of the culprit presented the offended family with \$1,000 in cash, 20 fine mats (worth perhaps \$1,000), and 20 kegs of salt beef (worth \$900) as material witness of the genuineness of their regret and desire for reconciliation. This is a very large amount of money provided by the family of the young culprit in a very short time in addition to their being humiliated publicly. However, the risk of mass murder is much graver and merits protection.

performing the ifoga were covered with "ietoga."¹⁴ Of course, there are members whose only aim is revenge. However, the leading matai will

¹⁴The word "ietoga" (material from Tonga) has other connotations--"Pulouoleola" (Hat-of-life or Protector-of-life) and "Tasiaeafe" (One-among-thousands).

According to the account that seems to be generally accepted by Samoans, the "ietoga" was originated from Manu'a. A lady named "Futa" from the village of Aga'e wove the mat for many, many moons. She left Manu'a for the island of Tutuila and there befriended another lady from the village Alao. The two women became very fond of each other. Futa later discovered her friend was pregnant out of wedlock by a fellow, Moamoaniu, whose occupation was to trap octopus. Futa went back to Manu'a and brought the mat to Tutuila. It was an unusually fine and beautiful mat, the only one of its kind. She presented the mat to her friend as a dowry for the baby. And from then on the mat was known as "fala o Futa" (mat of Futa).

For several generations the mat underwent changes of ownership following the lineage of Futa's friend until it reached a beautiful maiden named "Ta'uoloasi'i, daughter of Tuiafono, ranking alii of the village of Afono in Tutuila. Tuiafono's daughter was engaged to Fuāautoa, hero of the village of Pago Pago, who drove the Tongan warriors out of Tutuila. Lautivunia, brother of the Tongan King and leader of the Tongan war party, in retaliation for his defeat secretly organized a party of desperados to kidnap Fuāautoa's fiancée. The Tongan leader was successful in carrying out his plan and took the young maiden and her mother to Tonga with the mat. Upon arrival, the King of Tonga quickly noticed the beauty of the Samoan maiden and took her to be one of his consorts. According to the account, the king took a special interest in the Samoan girl. This created jealousy and led to a conspiracy by Tongan beauties of the royal palace. Thus the Samoan maiden was blamed for a very serious offense which under Tongan law was punishable with death by fire. The girl's mother, who brought the mat, decided, as a last resort, to present the mat as their pardon to the Tuitoga. When the girl opened the mat before the king and the Tongan nation, they were so impressed with the rare beauty of such a gift that the king ordered the girl's life be spared. Thus the name protector of life or one-among-thousands was given to the fine mat. These names were given later when the history of the mat became known.

For many years the mat-of-Futa was kept in the royal treasury of the Kings of Tonga. Sometime later, according to the account, Tuitoga Ka'uulufonua visited Samoa with his daughter and was entertained beautifully at Amoa, a sub-district of Faasaleleaga, Savai'i. During the royal visit, the king's daughter found a congenial lady friend, the "Sapi-o-Amoa" (Beauty of Amoa), daughter of a ranking alii of Amoa. Before the king and his daughter returned to Tonga, she persuaded the Sapi-o-Amoa to visit her in her homeland that she might return the favor. Not too much later the Sapi-o-Amoa fulfilled her promise and was royally entertained by her Tongan friend. Before she returned to Amoa, she was

consider very seriously the traditional principle of "va-fealoaloa'i" (regard for personal relationship). In some cases cross lineage of genealogies are involved and may affect both sides.

Samoans, by nature, are very emotional and quick-tempered, but down deep they are soft-hearted and easily moved, especially when they see a high ranking dignitary in the person of the minister of God or traditional leader willing to stoop low and to be humiliated for the protection of the honor of the offended family so that peace may be restored. It may take a little while for the offended family to pacify all immediate kinsfolk of the deceased and reach unanimous agreement. When the family has finally agreed, the signal is given by the leading orator to the ifoga party to "afio mai" and "tala'ao mai." These are terms of the alii language asking them to come into the house. Further speeches of high emotions and low, cool temper will be exchanged until the offended side assures the accused side and the accused side trusts the offended side that the slate has been wiped clean, after which follows a feast of reconciliation provided by the offended family and the presentation of the lau'ava (farewell feast) for the dying person by the family of the culprit.

The matai is also the family's high-priest. In the evening the family gathers at the house of the matai for the evening meal and worship. Before the meal the matai is served with his ceremonial kava drink. He pours a little of his kava onto the ground or floor and

presented with the "fala-o-Futa," a royal gift from the king's treasury. When the mat came back to Samoa, it was named "ietoga" (material from Tonga) by the people of Amoa. The name stuck, for it was in Amoa a first Guild of Fine-mat Weavers originated.

offers a prayer for the family. Siaosi Tana (George Turner) records the following sample prayers in his book "Samoa O Anamua."¹⁵

These are kava for you our gods
May you look with kindness upon this family
May our family be blessed and multiplied
May we be surrounded with good health.

May our plantations grow well and let them
bring forth abundance of fruits
And let us creatures of your creation
be surrounded with good things.

These are kava for you, gods of war
May the people of our village be courageous
to fight wars for you
And may they be multiplied.

These are kava for you sailing gods (these are
gods who come on Tongan canoes from other
lands)
Let not your boats enter our village shores
but please, sail on upon the great ocean
and land in other villages.

These are kava to you our gods
Chase away from us dailing gods
lest they come and bring disease and death.

After the meal, the matai receives reports of the day's activities and gives instructions for the next day's chores. He gives the "faamalo" (praise) for the good-workers and blessings for the tautua (service) well done. He speaks as father of the family, advising, counseling or chastising members who need disciplining. The evening gathering, according to tradition, is a reminder of the ancient practice of the sacred family of the Tagaloas as handed down by myths from Manu'a.

¹⁵ Siaosi Tana, Samoa O Anamua. (Wellington: Island Education Division, Department of Education, 1962), pp. 7, 95

Another important role of the matai is that of teacher and exemplar of the art of "faatamaalii" (ways of the aliis). The successful teaching of this art can be reflected in the daily behavior and language used by members of the matai's family. Dr. Siaosi Tana reported the following statement in his chronicles of Samoa Anamua: "It is their custom to converse in a respectful language. They address each other in honorific expressions. Even young boys call one another in the cultural language of the aliis. Because of this custom, I heard a foreigner who visited Samoa make a statement that the difficult thing in Samoa is not the finding of alii but the finding of common people. It seems everybody is an alii."¹⁶

Samoans learn by following the examples of their parents and elders. A Samoan young man and young woman know what to do and do not wait to be told. This is expected of young Samoans who have been trained in the faa-Samoa.

C. THE EXTENDED FAMILY (AIGA POTOPOTO)

1. Introduction

In this section we will focus our attention upon the extended-family, its structure and function in Samoan culture. I have already alluded to the fact that the titleholder and extended family are mutually bound to each other. The titleholder has no basis for his authority without the support of the extended family. Dr. Felix Keesing, in his book, "Elite Communication in Samoa," made the following

¹⁶Ibid., p. 135

observation about the titleholder:

"For his part the titleholder can never afford to neglect the fact that power to make or unmake his authority lies with his adherents. He, as an individual, is bearing the title and role with their consent, and if he fails to carry these with dignity, honor, and satisfaction in his supporters eyes, he can be rendered powerless, replaced, and even banished or otherwise punished. At all levels the titleholder who loses the support of his group is liable to repudiation."¹⁷

The above statement has been substantiated in many cases in the past. However, at the present time, two of the most distinguished titles in Western Samoa, "Mataafa" and "Tuimaleali'ifano," have been repudiated by their families. Hence their status and dignity are not recognized in village assembly, district or regional councils or even the Government of Western Samoa.

2. Definition

What is the extended-family? Why is it so important in Samoan culture? In order to give an accurate explanation, an understanding of the word "aiga" is necessary.

The word "aiga" popularly translated "family" in English has a much broader and more inclusive connotation in Samoan usage. Its meaning goes far beyond the restrictive biological reference commonly understood in western cultures. Dr. Fay Ala'ilima and Mr. Vaiao Ala'ilima, in their recent study of Samoa's Traditional Political

¹⁷Felix M. Kessing, Elite Communication in Samoa. (New York: Octagon Books, 1973)

System, give the following definition:

"A Samoan calls the following groups his aiga: 1) his true parents, 2) all the people who live in his household, 3) all people related to one title, 4) a group of titleholders, and 5) a large federation of families."¹⁸

This is a fairly accurate description that covers the wide variety of relationships implied in the Samoan usage of the word family. For the word, according to the Ala'ilima study, describes more of being related to a common ancestry than to its mere biological origin.¹⁹

3. Major Components

The Ala'ilima study identified five basic family-type groups that are active in the Samoan Political System. These are the biological family, the residential family, the descent family, the titular family and the political family. The first three groups are very important to this study. They constitute what the present author calls the "aiga-potopoto" (extended-family). The last two are only mentioned here and will not be discussed since their role and function are more political in nature and do not lie within the interest and concern of this study.

Let us now consider the three family-type groups that form the basic core of the extended-family.

¹⁸Fay and Vaiao Ala'ilima, Samoa's Traditional Political System, (unpublished materials under the sponsorship of the University of Hawaii).

¹⁹Ibid

The biological family, which includes the parents and their true children, functions as a sub-group within the larger family.²⁰ It exists to serve the needs of the extended-family. Its private needs are secondary, for it considers the obligations to the extended-family primary.

The residential family is a group of people who by genealogy, adoption or symbiotic affinity are related to one ancestral title name. Members of this group have chosen to live on family land under the direction of the present titleholder. This group is the basic economic and political unit in Samoan society.²¹

The third group is the descent group which is formed by people who are related to one ancestral title name, whether or not they live on family land with the titleholder.²² This wider group scatters all over the world, yet maintains rights over the selection of the titleholder and holds him responsible for the care and protection of its land and the promotion of the family's reputation. Members of this group also have the right to be considered for the selection of the titleholder. This is possible because Samoan family membership is based upon birthright and is for life. Members of the descent group, however, are responsible for promoting the tradition of the extended-family and keeping its spirit of unity alive wherever they live.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

4. Membership

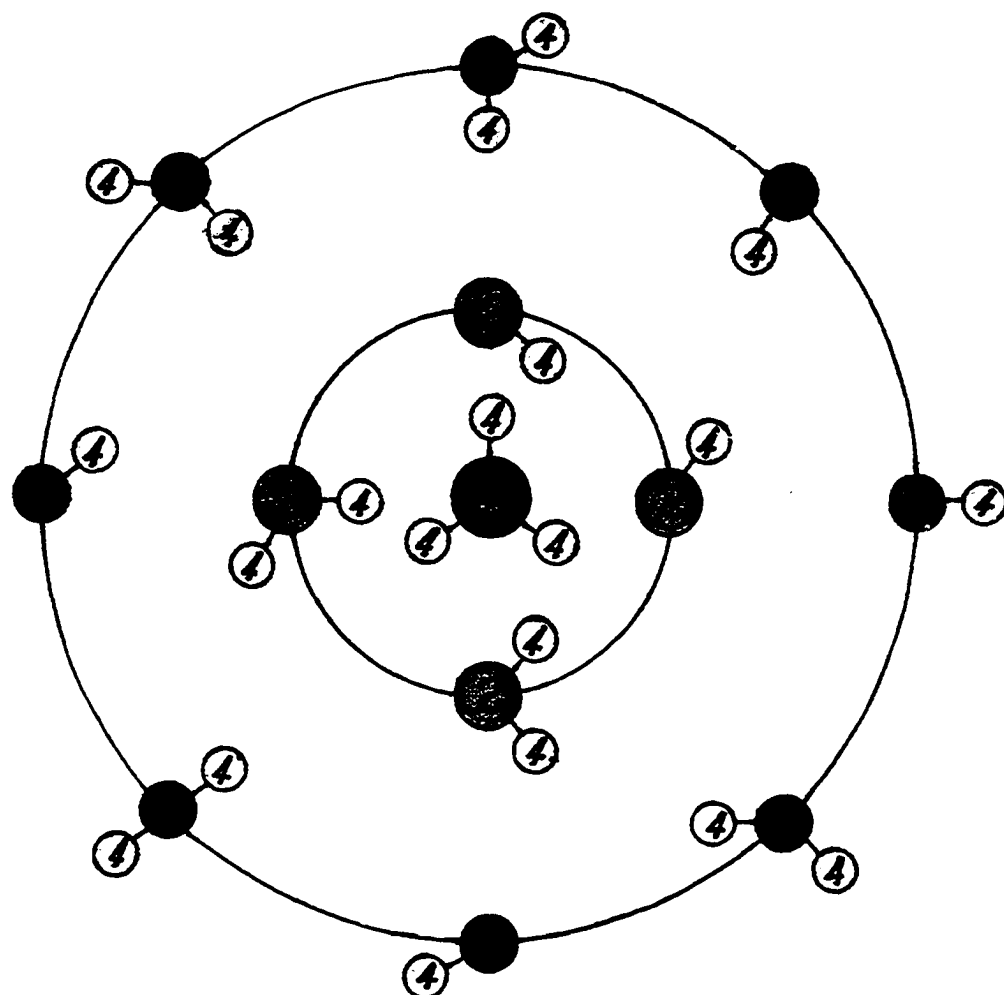
The membership of the extended-family is drawn from three distinct lineages, namely, tupolata, sa'otā and tupolo.

Tupolata are heirs and descendants of blood relatives. Sa'otā are heirs and descendants of an adopted son or daughter who at one time was a titleholder in the family. And Tupolo are heirs and descendants of a non-blood related member, who, through faithful and loyal service to the family was granted the privilege of being a titleholder. These three lineages together with their spouses constitute the membership of the extended-family.

Because of the inclusive nature of the extended-family, it is not unusual to find an aiga-potopoto with a membership of 1500 adults or more without including the children. The family of Lutu-Tupua-Afoafouvale in the villages of Fagatogo/Utulei, American Samoa, of which the author is well familiar, has 46 titleholders. It has a membership of more than 1700 adults scattered as far as the United States and Canada, Hawaii, New Zealand, Fiji and Western Samoa. And members who are living away from the mother-family are still carrying on the family's traditions and maintaining its obligations just as if they were at home in Samoa.

5. Structure and Organization

The following diagram gives a simplified illustration of the complex structure of the extended-family.



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Household of leading titleholder
-----Sa'o | 3. Households of family orators
-----Tulafale |
| 2. Households of ranking title-
holders next to leading title-
holder-----Tapa'au | 4. Households of nontitle
persons serving titleholders
1, 2 & 3 |

The structural relationships between 1 and 2, 2 and 3 are much more complex than what the diagram can show. There are relationships that overlap, especially between 2 and 3, that are very difficult to place in any logical arrangement. However, in the diagram 1, 2 and 3 are members of the Administrative Body under the direction of its chief titleholder. They represent all different lineages and descent groups that are directly connected with the family's ancestral title name. This body has tremendous power over the administration of the family.

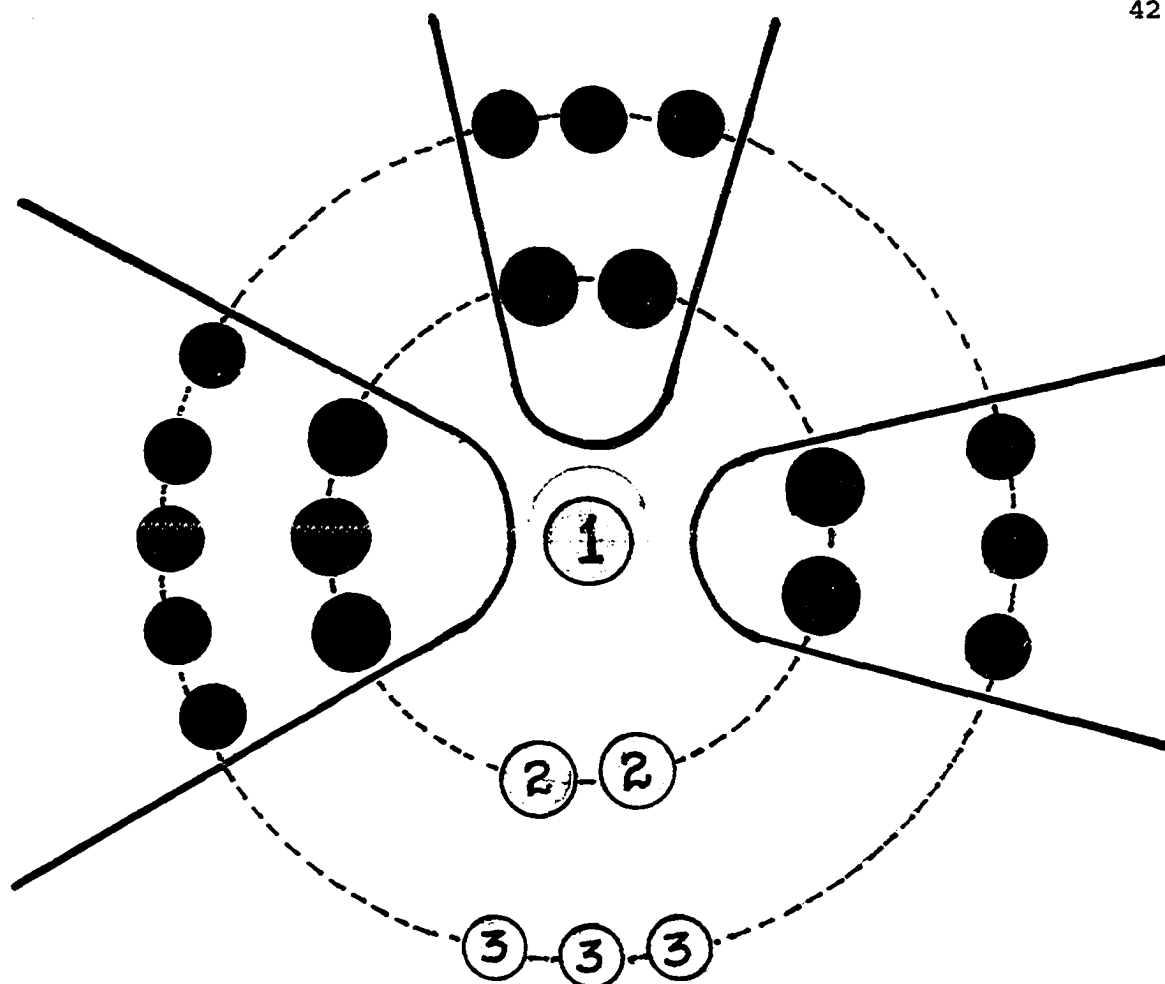
They are the executive branch, the judicial branch and the legislative branch combined. They are the brain power and economic power of the family.

The fourth group, the smaller satellites attached to 1, 2 and 3 are households of non-title persons. They provide the leg-work and physical labor for the family and are the major economic base upon which titleholders depend for the maintenance of the family's obligations.

In the diagram, it is obvious that titleholders are not all of equal rank. In 2 and 3 there are two or three different levels--high, intermediate and low ranking titleholders. These titleholders can further be grouped into different faletama/falealo (internal group lineages). The diagram on the following page portrays a simplified example of the different group lineages of the family of Lutu-Tupua-Afoafouvale.

In the extended-family of Lutu-Tupua-Afoafouvale, there are four basic group lineages upon which the whole family is organized. The three male descent groups namely, Ta'eletoto (Bloodbath), represented by the color blue, Lo'i (Pigsty), represented by the color green, Pua'a (Pig), represented by the color red and the female lineage of Tualima (Elbow), represented by the color yellow. I have mentioned elsewhere that this family has 46 titleholders. And each of these titleholders belongs to one of the four basic lineage groups in the diagram.

One further comment regarding the diagram; notice that the male descent group of Ta'eletoto as represented in the blue is the largest



Extended Family of Lutu-Tupua-Afoafouvale

of the four groups. According to family tradition, this descent group has been the custodian and holder of the leading title. However, its role was challenged by the female descent group of Tualima (Elbow) and won through the decision of the court. Hence, its present chief titleholder, Lutu Tenari Siieli Fuimaono, is a descendant of the Tualima's lineage as shown in the diagram.

The Tualima lineage is also the "tamasā"²³ (sacred child) of the Lutu-Tupua-Afoafouvale family. Tradition prohibits the female descent

See discussion of "tamasā" on page 14

group from assuming both major roles as "tamasa" and "leading titleholder." However, this situation is not uncommon in present day Samoa. This is one of the points of tension between Samoan traditional values and the influence of western culture as adopted by the present legal system of Samoa.

At this point, it is important to mention that there are families that have up to ten or more descent groups. And in every one of these groups, there is always a senior titleholder who assumes the leadership role for the group. Because of this division into descent-groups, the complexity of the family's organizational structure is greatly simplified. Each titleholder is responsible for a certain number of households, especially those who are directly related to him biologically. Each titleholder represents the households under his supervision in the family council and other functions. He also keeps a very close contact with his constituents as well as with the administrative body.

Western observers, looking at the system from the outside, often criticize the system as being autocratic and authoritarian. But a close observation reveals that the system is very democratic and representative in its arrangement.

One last comment concerns the role of the minister or priest. In the discussion of the titleholder, reference was made to the importance of the minister or priest in Samoan society. His role is also recognized in the family's organizational structure. Ministers are referred to as members of the Levitical priesthood as mentioned in the Old Testament. Since the Levites were charged with special spiritual

responsibilities, the Samoan Levitical minister/priest is looked upon as advisor, counsel and mediator for the moral and spiritual life of the family. They serve as neutral agents who iron out differences and work toward individual and family reconciliation.

6. Function and Role

In western society, the basic political unit is the individual. The emphasis upon the uniqueness of the individual is one of the basic pre-suppositions that underlie the thrust of liberal theology. Adolf Harnack, in his book, What is Christianity? cogently defended the uniqueness of the individual and the primacy of the human soul.²⁴ However, in Samoan understanding, it is the family that is the basic entity. The individual is only a cog in the wheel. Individual uniqueness is subsumed under the predominance of the family.

The family in Samoan culture is immortal. The individual exists and dies but the family lives on. It is the family that gives individuals their identity and dignity. A Samoan does not ask philosophical questions to find out who he/she is. He or she knows his/her identity through the family. When Samoans fight for political rights, they are thinking not of individual but of family rights.²⁵

As a custodian of the individual, the family assumes several roles. It is the Department of Social Security for the support of its senior citizens. This support is not dependent upon one's contributions

²⁴Adolf Harnack, What is Christianity? (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 67f

²⁵Ala'ilima.

to any old age pension program but is earned by being a member. It is the Department of Social Services for the care of the medically disabled and the unemployable. It is the Emergency Relief Organization, the Home for hard core delinquents, a Military Unit, a Police Department, a Spiritual and Moral Training Center and a host of other service organizations for the care and support of the individual and maintenance of family cohesiveness. It is this kind of care and concern that makes the individual feel a strong tie and sense of family obligation as well as a sense of identity and belonging to the family.

7. Complex of Extended Families

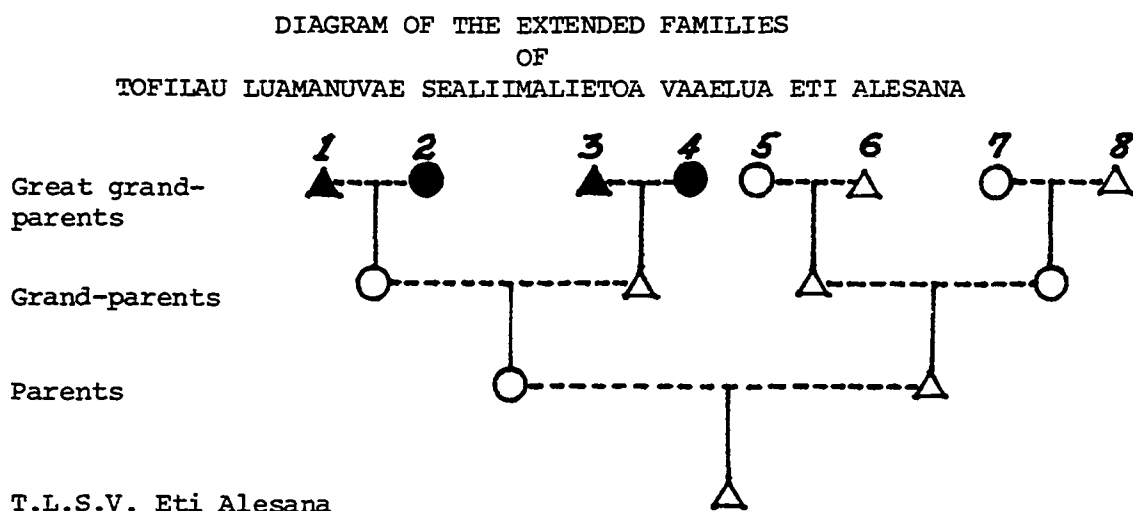
A Samoan child, by virtue of his/her birthright, has a legitimate claim upon four sets of extended families from parents' ancestral lineages. Hence, a Samoan person, by tracing genealogies as far back as his/her great grand-parents, has as many as eight or more extended families, to which he/she can relate during his/her lifetime, depending upon how he/she has actively associated with and participated in these families' obligations. See diagram on page 46.

However, it is very difficult for one to assume full responsibility for all the extended families to whom one is related. Therefore, one has to decide which of these eight he/she will associate with as his/her primary obligation. If he/she happens to be well educated, well-to-do, and possesses such admirable qualities as humility, fairness, personal integrity, loving-kindness, and is gentlemanly, God-fearing and knowledgeable in the traditions, his/her extended families may wish to bestow upon him/her their leading titles without his/her

claiming them. Otherwise, he/she has to contend for his/her rights to such titles if he/she desires them.

There are many people, particularly in Western Samoa, who hold three or four titles from different extended families located in different villages. Take, for instance, the titles of His Honorable Tofilau Luamanuvae Sealiimalietoa Vaaelua Eti Alesana. Mr. Eti Alesana is a distinguished statesman of the Government of Western Samoa and an outstanding, dedicated church layman. The four underlined names are title names from his extended families located in the villages of Iva, Salelologa, Pu'apu'a and Lalomalava respectively. Thus, Mr. Eti Alesana is obligated to serve the four villages in which the titles of his extended families are established, as well as the district and region in which these villages are located.

The following diagram is a simplified picture of the extended-families of the high ranking titleholder Tofilau Luamanuvae Sealiimalietoa Vaaelua Eti Alesana.



In the above diagram, Tofilau Luamanuvae Sealiimalietoa Vaaelua Eti Alesana, whose eight extended-families have been traced to his great grand-parents, had decided to relate himself primarily to 1, 2, 3 and 4 from his mother's side. His four titles are from those extended families. Hence, his time, energy and resources are used mostly in serving those four families and the villages, districts and regions where those families are located. However, that does not relieve him of his obligation to 5, 6, 7 and 8. Whenever there is a major need or crisis in one of the extended families from his father's side, he will respond either by using his own personal resources or soliciting assistance from his other families 1, 2, 3 and 4.

It should be pointed out that the freedom to choose whichever extended family one should relate to is a matter of personal preference, perhaps through long and close association, as well as of advice and guidance from one's parents.

This complex system of extended families has given a Samoan person a feeling of identity and security, for he is assured of protection and support from his families both physically and economically as well as psychologically and emotionally.

Maintaining one's relationships to all of one's extended families is, of course, not an easy matter. It can certainly drain one's personal resources. However, Samoans do not save their resources for personal use only, but invest them in the maintenance of their obligations to their fellow-members, friends and neighbors. A person's contributions to the support of his/her families' obligations include the investment of his/her bank deposits to fill the needs of people. It

is known that this will be paid back in greater dividends when he/she or any member of his/her immediate biological family is in need.

Oftentimes, a westerner, whose life is so oriented to an individualistic interest, finds the Samoan extended family system outrageous and impractical. Yet, the Samoans have lived by this system for many generations and still find it meaningful and fulfilling.

D. COMMUNAL LAND OWNERSHIP

1. Importance of Customary Lands

The Land Tenure System of Samoa is intimately tied to two other basic organizations that govern the Samoan way of life, the System of Titleholders and the Extended family. Samoans consider lands and titles as special inheritances of the family. There is no family in Samoa that is without these possessions. How they were acquired would be an interesting topic for future investigation. The management of these customary lands is the primary responsibility of the title person.

2. Traditional Use of Customary Lands

Land, in Samoan custom, is not used only for the physical support of the family's well-being and emotional security, it is also part and parcel of the honorific address of certain prominent titleholders. According to tradition, it is the place of residence of the high ranking alii that is the official "laumua" (capital) of a district or "malae" (center) of a subdistrict or village. Thus, district meetings, village councils and other important functions are held at

the "maota" (residence) of the high ranking alii. However, this so called capital or center of the district or village is situated on privately owned family property. It is not built by the community for its public use, although the village may have rendered some assistance. It is built by the resources of the ranking titleholder and his extended family, and it is now being used to serve the community as part of the faasamoa.

Other uses of customary lands include the provision of food and other articles of Samoan wealth to maintain community obligations and to build better public relations. Family owned lands are also donated for the building of churches, parsonages, agricultural farms for the support of pastors, for the building of schools, hospitals and other community service projects. Although they are privately owned lands, they are given for the common good of the community.

The other important use of customary lands that needs pointing out is for the building of large guest houses for aliis and tulafales. In Samoan traditional villages, there are no hotels or motels to accommodate unexpected visitors and traveling dignitaries. The guest house of the alii or tulafale is reserved for that purpose. It is expected by custom that aliis and tulafales must have guest houses since "taligāmalō" (entertaining of guests) is an integral part of the "faasamoa" and the practice of the culture plays an important role in these "taligāmalō." The Samoans tend to be very generous in the entertainment of their guests. They provide everything that one gets in a hotel. The only difference is that you pay for your room, meal and

entertainment at the hotel. In the guest house of the alii or tulafale, everything is free and they even provide their guests with going away gifts. This is called the "alofa faasamoa" (Samoan aloha).

Thus, we see how customary lands are very important as surety and guarantee for the maintenance of the physical support of all Samoans both at home and abroad. It is also a guarantee for the continuance of the cultural practices and way of life so dear to the Samoans.

Because of the importance of customary lands to the Samoan way of life, the people of Western Samoa decided to rule her destiny in order to protect the solidarity of her culture in which lands, titles and traditions are extremely important. This is also the primary reason why the majority of the people of American Samoa strongly opposed the idea of becoming citizens of the United States. The risk of dissolving the "faasamoa" is too great once her Land Tenure System is open to individual ownership rights.

3. The Underuse of Customary Lands

There are important reasons for Samoa to maintain her communal land ownership system. However, there are equally important reasons for her to consider other ways that would put these lands to their maximum use. Many customary lands are not fully utilized to their greatest potentials for the benefit of families and villages that own them. The following reasons could be given for the underdevelopment of these lands.

(a) The introduction and expansion of new industrial developments have created more jobs both for the blue and white collar labor force in private enterprises and government. As a result, more people are relying on the money economy than the traditional agrarian economy. Hence, open market places and big general merchandise stores have become central and important for the subsistence of these people. The cultivation and development of their customary lands have become a thing of the past. Thus large plots of good and productive lands have been left to the weeds and old coconuts that yield only minimal nuts.

(b) The matais are now preoccupied with other major responsibilities--either in a professional career, in business or as an employee of government--so that they no longer are able to give full attention to organizing and directing the activities of their families as in the old days. This often leads to the problem of absentee landlords when ranking titleholders of villages live somewhere in Pago Pago, Apia, Honolulu, New Zealand or the United States and let the everyday affairs of their families be directed by lesser matais or taule'ale'as with no real authority to encourage development of family lands. Many take pride in holding on to important titles of their families yet do not wish to live on family property where the responsibility of their titles belong. There are, of course, a few matais who are able to maintain a closer relationship with their families and are able to guide their daily and weekly activities.

(c) One other reason is the disenchantment of many young men toward the Samoan system of mutual obligation and mutual assistance. The system obliges Samoans to support and assist one another whenever

the need arises in the performance of their social and cultural obligations. The following episode is cited to illustrate the resentment against the system of mutual obligation.

"The experiences of one young man reveal some of the problems of an energetic and capable taule'ale'a. He had made a good-sized plantation with the intention of marketing the surplus to earn cash. To reduce the time taken in going to and from the distant plantation, and to protect the taro, he and his wife lived on the plantation. He rendered faithful "tautua" and had a good relation with his matai, who encouraged him in his efforts. When interviewed, the young man was discouraged about the hard work involved in producing a large surplus. Other members of the family, and even people of his neighboring villages with food shortages, had frequently asked for some of his produce, and their requests could not be refused."²⁶

Unfortunately, the above incident was also used by western observers as a serious criticism to prove that the system of mutual obligation is cruel and oppressive.²⁷ This criticism is unfair and misinformed. Of course, the young man can refuse, in a nice way, the frequent pestering of the beggars. With a clear and reasonable explanation of his needs and those of the many other people he had been helping, his kinspeople and neighbors would understand. Furthermore, it is not the system that is at fault. It is the abuse of the system by able-bodied people who, instead of taking pride in their own ability to work and produce their own food supply, rather depend on the luxury

²⁶ AGS:SF/WES 2, Technical Report 1, Agricultural Development, Western Samoa Land Tenure (based on work of F. K. Sutter), Rome, 1971, p. 12

²⁷ Ibid.

of handouts. And in Samoa with the availability of customary farm lands, there is no legitimate reason for any family or village to experience a shortage of food unless their food supply had been destroyed by very strong winds or an unexpected tragedy. The same criticism can be directed to the welfare system of western countries. It has often been abused by indolent and parasitic people. Thus, the unfortunate experience of young Samoans with the system of mutual obligation cannot be construed as a valid criticism of the system per se. However, the situation that such disappointment created often leads to the disuse of customary lands, and this, in turn, has a detrimental effect on the economy of the country.

4. An Optional Approach to the Use of Customary Lands

Although it is true that many customary lands are not being developed to their maximum potentials, there are encouraging signs of a few energetic Samoans who are actively engaged in progressive ways to make the most of their customary lands. The approach taken by the Honorable Vaai Kolone of Vaisala, Savai'i, is worth citing as a model example. "Once a school teacher, then a trader, he combines a good grasp of 'western' economics with skill and power in Samoan custom."²⁸ He started a plantation that has now become the showplace of successful agricultural developments in the Pacific. At the initial phase of the project, Afioga Vaai Kolone had an understanding with his extended family to hold off all demands on the plantation until it was successful

²⁸ Ibid., p. 14

enough to take care of its own operation and able to realize a substantial profit for the use of the family. It was hard work in the beginning. However, the project progressed slowly until in 1955, 140 acres were cultivated with cocoa plants. Five years later, the project expanded to 400 acres. Today, the plantation covers over 1000 acres and maintains its productivity with a large labor force drawn from his own family and village as well as from other neighboring villages. The usefulness of the Vaai plantation to the people of Savai'i and to the economy of Western Samoa is unquestionable. This approach is certainly a viable option in cultivating customary lands for the benefit of the people of Samoa and other countries that need its taro, banana, cocoa, and cocoanut produce.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF PRESENT SITUATION

1. Introduction

In Chapter III, I discussed the three main institutions that formed the basic foundation of the "Faasamoa" (Samoan Way). These are the System of Titleholders, the Extended Family Complex and the Land Tenure System. In this Chapter, I shall attempt to address some of the problems faced by the Samoans as they try to practice their "Faasamoa" under the impact of western culture and its economic influence. My comments will include the situation in Samoa proper as well as life away from Samoa, especially in Hawaii and on the mainland of the United States.

2. Erosion of Parental Authority

As already pointed out, the Samoan immediate family--the basic institution of western society--serves as a sub-group of the extended family, the primary social organization in Samoan life. Since the immediate family provides the basic foundational support for the extended family, its role and function is vital and significant. It is in the immediate family that the groundwork is laid for members to learn how to respect the elders and those who are in authority. It is here that a child learns the rules of good etiquette and proper manners. It is here that a child learns the right language to use when addressing an elder and how to behave before a titleholder. It is in the immediate family that the children learn the proper way to sit, to speak, to walk,

to lie down, to eat, to drink or to carry on a conversation with their seniors. Also, it is here that a child learns the value of sharing, the importance of mutual cooperation and caring concern for their "aigas" (relatives).

The structure and operation of the immediate family is similar to that of the extended family with the parents at the top and the youngest child at the bottom. This order is the reverse of the set-up of the Western style family where the children seem to rule and the parents to follow. This may be a caricature, yet a fairly good caricature. In the Samoan family, individualism is frowned upon if not regarded as downright objectionable. Family and group ego is encouraged and praised.

Thus, in the circle of the immediate family, the authority is vested in the father or head of the household. Whether he is a title holder or not, he assumes that role as the matai does in the extended family. He is the decision-maker, and usually his word is binding for the family. The wife's duty is to offer good advice and to make suggestions. Whether or not her advice is considered is the father's prerogative. The children's primary responsibility is to obey their father's command. And it is the duty of the elder to see that father's word is being carried out. Other children are expected to respect the leadership of the elder. Each member knows and is aware of his/her standing in the family. Thus, we see in the immediate family a miniature model of the extended family in form and in operation.

When there is a vital issue in the family, the father may wish to call a meeting to solicit opinions that might help him with his

decision. In such family meetings, in-laws are silent members. They are present, yet they do not have freedom of expression unless asked or permitted by the head of the family. This practice is observed on both the immediate and extended family levels.

The expression of opinions follows a rigid procedure in which the eldest son or daughter speaks after the parents. Other members take their turns following the chronological order of the family's genealogy until the youngest member is heard. No attempt is made to force anybody to speak if he or she has nothing to share. Neither is preference shown to members holding ranking titles in their own particular extended family or other families to which they are closely related. It is in meetings of the extended family that proper recognition is given to titleholders. Thus, in the immediate family, chronological age is the rule. Whereas in the extended family, age and ranking titles are important, with the latter taking priority.

Thus we see in the immediate family a clear channel of command coming from the top and filtered down to the bottom. Those at the bottom serve as hands and feet to carry out the will of the head of the family. The success of the whole operation depends on how well these various parts perform their designated tasks. Faithful obedience and respect for authority are expected of every member. These admirable qualities of the Samoan way of life are constantly drilled into the children at the early stages of their learning experience. At home they are under the authority of parents and older siblings. In the extended family, they are under the authority of titleholders and senior members. In the village there is the authority of the council

of aliis and tulafales. At church there is the authority of the pastor, layleaders, deacons and elders. In school they are under the authority of the teachers and school administrators. At whatever level of socialization the child or grown-up moves, he or she is under some form of parental control and supervision. These controls have direct personal relationships to the child.

Samoan parental control and authority is further enhanced and legitimized by the authority of the Bible. The following passages are often quoted as the basis for such legitimization:

"Honor your father and your mother, that
your days may be long in the land which
the Lord your God gives you."
(Exodus 20:12) RSV

"Discipline your son while there is hope,
do not set your heart on his destruction."
(Proverb 19:18)

"Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from
it." (Proverb 22:6)

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a
child left to himself brings shame to his
mother." (Proverb 29:15)

"Discipline your son and he will give you
rest; he will give delight to your heart."
(Proverb 29:17)

These biblical exhortations are taken seriously by parents in their attempts to bring up their children to be good members of the family, the church and community. They believe God will certainly punish them if they fail in the responsibility given to them as parents. And in their effort to perform their duty well, many resort to extreme measures of corporal punishment in order to bring their

children in line with the Bible's admonition as well as the Samoan standard of excellence, which is respect for authority and performance of required services without question or complaint.

However, in present day Samoa, especially areas where high density of mixed population is concentrated like Apia and Pago Pago, many parents are finding it extremely difficult to manage their homes in the traditional authoritarian approach.

In the spring of 1978, a special team of local Samoan counselors, trained at the University of Hawaii under the direction of Dr. Nancy Foon Young of the Ethnic Department, conducted a series of counseling workshops for teachers, counselors, school administrators, parents and students for the Department of Education in American Samoa. The team was led by Mrs. Tuiolematagi Margaret Iofi, and the present authority was involved as a volunteer member of the team. The purpose of the workshops was to assist teachers, counselors and school administrators with some of the latest techniques in counseling students. The rationale for using Samoans is that they understand the culture and are more familiar with the present local situation. Also, their input is vital for planning the content and materials to be used in the workshops. These workshops were considered the best ever presented in American Samoa from the viewpoints of the professionals and parents and students involved.

However, counseling is something entirely new in the history of the Educational System in Samoa. Its potential and usefulness as a helping tool has not been thoroughly utilized by the educational system. The church is also oblivious to the usefulness of counseling. One of

the reasons for the lack of interest in counseling is its negative connotation in the thinking of many Samoans. They feel counseling is a Western gimmick that runs counter to the Samoan way of handling troublesome students. The problems in schools have mounted to unmanageable proportions so that administrators have had to look elsewhere for help rather than continue the old traditional approach. When the question was put to the participants of these workshops as to the reason for such blatant disrespect for authority on the part of the students, several factors were cited. Among them were the corrupting influence of returning Samoans who have brought with them some of the undesirable ways of the West, new liberal laws for the protection of the rights of children and youth, the generation gap, broken homes, questionable integrity of parents "faatonuga" (commands), the lack of proper home supervision and the erosion of parental authority. These factors are not only responsible for students' unmanageable behavior, but also threaten the integrity of the immediate family as a major training ground in molding acceptable and commendable Samoan cultural behavior.

In spite of the current rise in youth problems and family disorientation, there are still many Samoan families that are operating successfully within the framework of the traditional authoritarian approach. This is true in rural areas of Samoa as well as in great metropolitan centers of the west. The successful family of Sololima and Tufutasi of Los Angeles is a case in point. The couple has 12 children ranging in ages from 12 to 33. Sololima is not a titleholder. He raised his family on his meagre salary as an unskilled laborer in

one of Chevrolet's Assembly Plants in the San Fernando Valley. He did it without soliciting assistance from the Department of Social Services. Sololima was too proud to ask for handouts and taught his family the necessity of depending on each other and having faith in the goodness of God. He was at the time the leading layman of his church. He is presently a full fledged ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Samoa, serving a local congregation in Los Angeles. When his eldest son completed High School, he sought employment so that he might help with the support of their big family. When Sololima retired from his job with Chevrolet Corporation, four of his older children had graduated from Junior Colleges and found good skilled jobs each contributing to the support of the family. The children continued to live under the authority of the father until seven of the older ones married and found homes close to their parents. The close and warm relationship already established through the father's authority continues to play a vital role in keeping the family together. The children feel a strong obligation to help their parents and the younger siblings who are still in school. They also continue with their faithful "tautua" toward the maintenance of their family's obligations and church responsibilities. The younger siblings have never been involved in the behavioral problems of their peer-groups. The close home supervision of the parents together with the caring concern of the older brothers and sisters have contributed much to keeping them out of trouble. One could not help being impressed with the harmonious and cordial relationship seen among members of this family. The success of the family is due primarily to the traditional method employed by the father for the discipline of the

children. This has been the conviction of the father and attested to by some of the older members of the family.

Another successful family raised in the traditional way is the family of Tulafale and Fulu of South San Francisco. Tulafale is both a ranking titleholder and pastor of the Methodist Church in Samoa. The family has five boys and one girl. Two of the older boys are college graduates and successful businessmen in Samoa. Both hold responsible positions in the Government of American Samoa. They make it a point to visit their parents at least one or twice a year depending on opportunities to leave their jobs. The third son is a professional baseball player in a Major League earning \$85,000 a year, perhaps the highest paid Samoan anywhere in the world today. The other two boys are highly trained technicians in mechanical engineering working for the Civil Service in San Francisco. All of them are married and own beautiful homes in exclusive areas of South San Francisco close to their parents, except for the two older boys, who have their beautiful homes in American Samoa. The girl is also married and lives in her own home close to her parents. Although each of them has done well in the economic world and is actively involved in a professional career, that has never broken or changed the intimate and close relationship of the family under the authority and guidance of their father. The respect of the younger toward the elder, the reverence and devotion toward their parents, and the mutual love among the brothers and the sister have never changed, even with the changes in their economic and social status. They continue to maintain their obligations to their extended family in the United States and Samoa under their father's rule. When the father

built a guest home in American Samoa, each of the children contributed \$2,000 toward its cost. When the house was ready for dedication, the children again contributed substantial amounts of money to cover those expenses. When asked how they are able to maintain the cohesiveness of their relationship in spite of their private interests, one of the older boys confided that they owed it all to the hard discipline they received from their father and the loving care of their mother. He further remarked that none of them would ever want to live any other way.

There is no question that parental authority is waning in many families of present day Samoa. However, it is still a live option to many other Samoan families who believe in the traditional approach. How much longer such an option can withstand the onslaught of many new changes that have been introduced into Samoa through the fascinating label, "progress," or being "developed," only time will tell.

3. The Toll of Progress

With the entrance of the Europeans into the isolated world of the Samoans in the beginning of the 18th century, changes swiftly began to emerge. As E. B. Tylor noted in his preface to Turner,

With the coming of the Europeans rapid
changes began...For good and for evil,
the old order had to change, till now
the South Sea Islanders are people dressed
in Manchester print and Bradford cloth,
receiving European ideas from the pulpit,
the school, and the newspaper, indoctrinated

with the white man's virtues, and, alas!
often still more deeply imbued with white
man's vices.¹

Obviously, not all of the innovations introduced by the Europeans were altogether favorable for the islanders. Hence, leaders of family clans tried unsuccessfully to avert the detrimental and destructive elements of the white man's influence. In their evening family gatherings, leaders would offer to their family gods such prayers as:

"Drive away from us sailing gods, lest
they come and cause disease and death."²

Hence, for many years, the Samoans were able to resist succumbing completely to the incessant infringement of foreign intruders upon their culture. However, with the inception of space technology that has reduced distance to a matter of hours instead of days or weeks, Samoa suddenly found herself being catapulted from a place nowhere in the vast Pacific Ocean into the spotlight of world travel and tourism. Communications with the West, as well as other countries of the Pacific, have opened up many new possibilities for Samoans. With the change in the political administration in American Samoa from the United States Navy to the Department of the Interior in the fifties, and the establishment of the Independent Government of Western Samoa in the sixties, a new search for political identity and self-determination has occupied the minds of the leaders of Samoa. Thus, both governments undertook a

¹ George Turner, SAMOA A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before.
(London: Macmillan, 1884), p. viii.

² Ibid.

search for overseas economic aid and technical assistance. Countries in Europe and other parts of the Pacific send assistance to the Government of Western Samoa, while the United States continues pouring in millions of dollars to help subsidize the economy of American Samoa. With improved methods of transportation, both sea and air, many Samoans have opportunities to visit, study and find employment in other countries of the West and the Pacific, especially New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii and the United States. These new developments have certainly opened a new chapter in the history of Samoa. The changes reported by Dr. George Turner in the beginning of the 18th century have now been accelerated to high speed. Only this time, it is not changes enforced by foreign intruders, but changes fondly requested by the Samoans themselves. The negative effect of some of these innovations has caused real concern in the minds of some of the traditional and church leaders about the future of Samoa and her unique way of life. They feel if the present trend of progressive developments continues to accelerate without proper moral, cultural and spiritual preparation and adjustment, the Samoan Way of Life may soon be displaced by the dominant culture of the West if not outright rejected by her own people.

It is quite noticeable that the glamour and sophistication of the West have made a strong impression upon many Samoans. Its materialistic and individualistic emphasis have so grasped the imagination of the present generation that many are disenchanted with the importance of their own traditional value system.

It is now fashionable among adults and young people to speak English, even broken English, as a sign of intelligence and sophistica-

tion like the "papalagi" (caucasians). It is rather ironic that many educated Samoans, raised in the traditional culture, claim inadequacy in expressing themselves in their mother-tongue. Rather than working to enlarge their vocabulary in Samoan, they rely on using English as an easy way out. They feel the Samoan language is not precise and rich enough to express their sophistication. Others feel that wearing trousers, socks and shoes; owning a car or living in a European style home is a symbol of status and prestige. Of course, there is nothing wrong with having an automobile, a stereophonic record-player or television set. However, there is a danger of being preoccupied with the accumulation of these material possessions and this can have an adverse effect on family relationships and the social, cultural and spiritual life of the people.

Take for example, the divorce rate, which is at an all time high. This is something which was very little known before the beginning of the modern "developed" era in Samoan history. The crime rate is increasing. Many young adults have a very cheap view of human life. Other social problems such as juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, loose morality, the use of drugs and other problems of a multi-cultural society, continue to plague present day Samoa.

In the September issue of the "Voice of American Samoa from Washington D. C.,"³ Special Representative High Ranking Orator Fofō I. Sunia reported a congressional appropriation of almost \$200,000 to implement programs to curb conflicts between cultures in American Samoa.

³Fofō I. Sunia, Voice of Samoa from Washington D. C., September, 1979

These conflicts have arisen partly out of the continuing inflow of other Pacific Islanders and Oriental people to take advantage of the milk and honey that have been lavishly provided by Uncle Sam to make American Samoa come of age. The milk and honey have certainly improved the economic condition of American Samoa, but they have also created a superiority complex syndrome in the people of American Samoa toward other people, an attitude foreign to her traditional culture.

In the area of politics, bribery and underhanded tactics to gain votes in order to get into office or to remain in office is an exercise in political maneuvering without regard to ethical and moral integrity. As of December, 1979 the Government of Western Samoa was in its 10th month without a meeting of Parliament to conduct the business of Government. This has happened because of the unresolved issue between the incumbent Prime Minister and his challenger--leader of the Human Rights--as to who had the majority vote in the February election. Court case after court case has been held to determine the legitimate members who may vote for the new Prime Minister. This unfortunate situation has caused deep anxiety and concern among the people of Western Samoa.

Another sad situation is the way the Samoans through preoccupation with the glamour of wealth have downgraded the value and significance of one of their most prized possessions, the "fietoga" (finemat). In taking advantage of the cultural value of the finemat, many guilds have mass produced them, using cheap quality materials and shoddy workmanship so that they may be sold in stores like any ordinary product. The finemat takes special skill, dexterity and extreme patience to make. A high quality finemat takes years of meticulous and

painstaking labor. But the appearance of poor quality finemats has not only downgraded the value and significance of the "ietoga" as an item of rare beauty, but also lowered the prestige and dignity of the occasion on which it is used. For the quality of finemats used in any cultural occasion reflects the importance of that occasion.

According to tradition, the finemat is used only in functions pertaining to titleholders. Today, however, finemats are used on any occasion for the purpose of making money. A group of women or a youth organization may decide to take an expensive trip to New Zealand, Hawaii or the United States to raise money for a special project at home. They will collect as many finemats as they could get, without regard to quality. The more finemats they could lug overseas, the more money they would be able to extract from wallets and purses of their poor countrymen who are trying to survive in foreign countries. Hence, the cultural value of the finemat is being abused and people are being victimized by its improper and cheap use.

Elsewhere, reference was made to the gradual disappearance in many progressive families of one of Samoa's distinguished practices in personal relationships. This is the special practice in the relationship between brother and sister as discussed on page 14. Families have been influenced by Western ways of raising children and are no longer able to uphold the uniqueness of that cultural practice.

Also, the personal relationships between junior and senior titleholders are being affected by the lure and fascination of Western education and sophistication. A young man trained in the United States went to Samoa to claim one of the leading titles of his family. Through

political manipulation by his shrewd uncle, he was able to get the title without contention. He then proposed to attend an important meeting of the traditional leaders of the district to which his title belongs, in order to be heard. The aggressive young fellow, armed with his American education and experience, and conscious of his new status of importance, after being introduced by his uncle, who was knowledgeable in the tradition, rose in front of the whole sitting council and made his speech. Using the common and unstately language in a manner which reflected an attitude of superiority in academic and professional know-how, he made several far-fetched promises that impressed the naive and gullible minds of local leaders as to what he could do to bring overseas aid to help improve the living conditions and economy of their district. Unfortunately, none of the promises made were ever fulfilled. However, the point that I wish to make is that even progress in formal education coupled with a lift in economic resources can certainly ruin one's sense of respect and cause one to fail to observe the finer points in one's own tradition. In the case of the young man, he failed to show respect to his peers and seniors by standing in front of the sitting council when he made his speech. He also failed to show respect to the honor and dignity of the council by the use of undignified language and the kind of attitude in which he presented his proposals.

Perhaps what I have described so far may be dismissed by some critics as a caricature of the present situation in Samoa. It may also be charged as a negative, pessimistic and unrealistic evaluation. If it is a caricature, I believe it is a very successful one. I am not at all convinced that the moral, social, cultural, political and

spiritual life of Samoa are in the best of conditions. I firmly believe that the material wealth and efficiency of modern Western economics and technology is beginning to choke the moral and spiritual life and smother the social and cultural values of Samoa. If this trend continues without check, I am afraid the ship of Samoa is certainly heading toward the rocks. If this happens, there is no one to blame but the Samoans themselves.

4. The Misuse of the System of Mutual Obligation

As previously mentioned, the social network of mutual obligation and mutual assistance is one of the most distinguishing and unique features of the Samoan Way of Life. The system obliges Samoans to render help to kins-people, friends, colleagues and neighbors, especially in major social events such as weddings, funerals, title installations, church dedications, special family or community projects and in major human crisis. The implementation of the system of mutual obligation has a double focus. There is a collective assistance rendered by the family or community as a corporate body, and there are also free-will contributions by private individual members. These contributions are not in any way forced upon individual members. However, help is expected of every family member through love and loyalty to the tradition.

In order to clarify the way these contributions are made, let us use as an example the wedding of Susana, daughter of Simi and Nina. First, there is the contribution of Simi and Nina and their biological children. Then there are the separate contributions of Simi's family

(brothers and sisters) and Nina's immediate family (brothers and sisters). Then come the contributions of Simi's extended families both on his father's and mother's sides. These are followed by contributions of political and titular families related to both extended families of Simi and Nina. There are also contributions from Simi's and Nina's friends, colleagues and neighbors. There are, in addition, group and organization contributions.

In addition to these contributions, however, there are also contributions from private individuals. Most of these individuals are persons already involved in collective contributions of their families or organizations that are related directly to Simi and Nina and their respective extended families.

Thus, it is possible for one person to make three or four contributions toward the wedding of Susana through their various intricate family and organizational ties. Hence, it is not unusual for a member to spend one hundred to three hundred dollars per "faalavelave" (mutual obligation), depending on how one is related to that family and the number of family ties one wishes to recognize. However, this is all a matter of personal choice. The above illustration, showing how contributions are made, can be applied to any social event where the system of mutual obligation is practiced.

Perhaps the complexities of these different family relationships one is obligated to fulfill has caused some Westerners to criticize the system as cruel and unfair.

Of course, no responsible Samoan can deny the difficulty in trying to fulfill his obligations in all of these different relation-

ships he is privileged to have. Many have felt the burden of being asked, sometimes, almost every week to make a contribution to either family, church or community. In fact, a couple in American Samoa named one of their children "Lemotu-faalavelave" (Unceasing obligations), as a reminder of the constant asking for contributions by leaders of their extended families.

Several people, including matais (titleholders), have expressed the feeling of "fiu" and "lēlavā" (being tired and weary) because of the continuous soliciting of contributions to maintain these cultural obligations. Some have tried to escape these traditional responsibilities by going away to live in foreign countries. A minister of a small sectarian group left Samoa with his family to settle in another country because of his dissatisfaction with the Samoan cultural system. He claims he will never get to heaven by living in Samoa and continuing to practice her way of life. But, to his amazement, the practice of carrying out these traditional responsibilities is even greater in foreign lands than in Samoa. An expression often quoted by Samoans in foreign countries is "E faapea foi o le o mai i nei atunu'u o le a tu'u ai le faasamoa. A o lenei e faateleina iinei." The interpretation of that expression is, "We thought coming to this new land would put an end to the faasamoa. However, it seems worse here than in the home country."

Perhaps it is proper to ask why the Samoans keep contributing to these cultural obligations if they are really tired and weary of them. Are they afraid that their family rights will be jeopardized if they do not participate? Or, are they being coerced to provide toward

every given family obligation? Of course not.

The Samoans continue maintaining their cultural obligations because it is part and parcel of their total being.

Professor James Muilenburg, in his book, "The Way of Israel," writes:

"The sense of obligation lies deep in the heart of every man, sometimes obscurely, sometimes distraughtly or oppressively, but, to some degree or another, however variously conceived or deeply felt, it belongs to the interior fabric of his consciousness."⁴

Professor Muilenburg's statement defines in a very precise sense the feelings and attitudes of the Samoans toward their system of mutual obligation. The system of mutual obligation is so deeply imbedded in the consciousness of the Samoans that, wherever they go, or whatever their economic status may be, they will continue to honor the obligation because it is deeply woven into the interior of their personalities.

Thus, the Samoans will continue to make contributions to help their relatives and friends, either to show their love and gratitude or to express their loyalty to their family, church or village, or to demonstrate their spirit of wanting to do their best in the performing of their faithful service to their admired leaders.

The system of mutual obligation is something the Samoans should be proud of and should continue to affirm, in spite of the negative criticisms leveled against it by Westerners and other Samoans. For these criticisms will in no way invalidate the theological significance

⁴James Muilenburg, The Way of Israel. (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 63

and worthiness of the system for the following reasons:

1. Individuals may decide whether or not to participate. They are free to give more, to give the requested amount by their family leaders, to give whatever they can afford, or not to give at all. The family does not punish members who do not wish to participate. Of course, family leaders would like as many members as possible to help in their corporate responsibility, for the more hands, the lighter the load. However, the family still assumes responsibility toward all its members including those who do not wish to be involved. Let me cite an example.

A strong young Samoan, when arriving in San Diego in 1953, found a new and attractive kind of life for himself. In the enjoyment of his new-found freedom, he deliberately neglected any association with his family. On many occasions, leaders of his family would contact him asking if he would be willing to help with their family's obligations. However, the young man ignored his family leaders. When the fellow passed away, leaders of his family found out that his body would be taken care of by the Department of Social Services without the benefit of proper funeral services. Hence, his extended family decided to assume all funeral expenses in order for their kinsman to have a respectable funeral service and burial rites. Two similar cases happened in Hawaii. The feeling of family concern, family support and family solidarity is very strong among the Samoans.

2. A member is not bound by tradition to make contributions to all of his intricate family ties in every occurrence of a "faalavelave." One will simply have to choose which "faalavelave" he will support and

which one he will pass until some other time. It is through responding to the "faalavelave" that one feels a strong identity with his great family tradition, a privilege that should not be taken away from the Samoans. Furthermore, the purpose of a collective contribution by the major body is to relieve individuals from making several other contributions to the same "faalavelave."

3. The system of mutual obligation, first conceived by our forebears with their limited and simple understanding, has tremendous profundity and deep relevance to the Biblical notion of group salvation. Primitive Jewish Christianity, as reported by the writer of the Book of Acts, emphasized group salvation. However, before Christianity reached the shores of the Pacific Islands, Samoa had already at her disposal the spirit of the teaching of Primitive Christianity through her practice of the system of mutual obligation and mutual assistance. It is this system that has kept the Samoan people close together and able to maintain their identity and solidarity as a people against all the foreign influences that have invaded her shores.

Because of the system of mutual obligation and mutual concern, no condition of extreme poverty is found in Samoa. But neither does there exist a special category of super-wealthy Samoans. The system tends to place all Samoans in the middle range. This concentration of everybody in the middle can be identified in theological parlance as "group salvation." Hence, in the Samoan system, the only really wealthy person is the one who continues to invest his resources in the maintenance of his family ties, in the creation of good public relations, and in community harmony.

The following examples were taken from real life situations in which the Samoans practiced their system of mutual obligations.

EXAMPLE 1. TITLE INSTALLATION

Date: 1960
 Village: Amouli, American Samoa
 Title: "Matua"

Background Information

Officer of Immigration Department, American Samoa; influential church leader both in the Methodist and Congregational Christian churches in Samoa; successful businessman; respected leader both in traditional and modern day politics; has many respected connections to titular and political families of Samoa; wife is of royal ancestry also has ties to major titular and political families of Samoa.

CONTRIBUTIONS	CASH	FINEMATS
1. Relatives from Western Samoa	\$ 6,340	1,305
2. Relatives from American Samoa	17,074	1,600
3. Relatives from Hawaii & USA	9,112	313
4. Friends and others	4,101	400
TOTAL	\$36,627	3,618

DISTRIBUTIONS

In Samoan custom, when someone honors you, you must also respond to that person with honor. It is like returning a favor. However, the Samoans do not wait until a later time to return the favor. It is done right at the time people bring their contributions in your honor.

Thus, the money and finemats accumulated at the event of the Title Installation were distributed to the following groups:

1. Gifts to local pastors of the village denominations
2. Gifts to all "matais" (titleholders present at the occasion)
3. Gifts to other distinguished guests present
4. Gifts to relatives from Western Samoa, American Samoa, Hawaii and the United States
5. Gifts to those who helped with the preparation

EXAMPLE 2. WEDDING

Name of Bride: Luapi (24 years old)
 Name of Groom: Lama'ula (22 years old)
 City: San Diego
 Date: September, 1979

Background Information

Bride - Dry Cleaning and Laundry work employee; Groom - serviceman in Marine Corps; Parents of Bride - respected church leaders at San Diego Samoan Congregational Church.

<u>CONTRIBUTIONS</u>	<u>CASH</u>	<u>FINEMATS</u>
1. From church of Bride's parents	\$ 5,000	
2. From extended families of Bride (on her father and mother's sides)	7,000	900
3. From extended families of Groom (on his father and mother's sides)	3,000	
4. Wedding dinner provided by extended families of Bride and Groom	3,000	
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$18,000</u>	<u>900</u>

DISTRIBUTIONS

1. Share of Bride and Groom
2. Expenses of wedding
3. Share of Bride's extended family
4. Share of Groom's extended family
5. Share of Church (S.D. Samoan Congregational Christian Church)
6. Gift to Officiating minister
7. Gift to guest ministers and traditional leaders
8. Gift to individual donors
9. Gift to helpers

EXAMPLE 3. FUNERAL

Name: Leli'a Mapusua
 Place: Los Angeles
 Date: February, 1979

Background Information

Mapusua was a nontitle person 41 years old; owner of "La o Samoa" a group of professional Polynesian Entertainers; rendered faithful tautua to his families in Samoa, Tonga, Hawaii and Mainland United States; contributed service of his company free to fund raising projects of church organizations, Methodist, Mormon, Congregational in Hawaii and California; helped many of his relatives get established in the professional entertainment business; well-liked by his families and friends.

<u>CONTRIBUTIONS</u>	<u>CASH</u>	<u>FINEMATS</u>
1. Contributions from friends	\$18,000	300
2. Contributions from family in Samoa	4,000	350
3. Contributions from family in Hawaii	1,000	50
4. Contributions from family in USA	10,000	170
5. Contributions from family in Tonga	5,600	150
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$38,600</u>	<u>1020</u>

DISTRIBUTIONS

1. Expenses of funeral
2. Share of extended family of Mapusua
3. Share of extended family of Mrs. Mapusua
4. Gifts to Church choirs, ministers, traditional leaders, guests
5. Gifts to helpers
6. Share of Mrs. Mapusua and her immediate family
7. Other expenses pertaining to funeral
8. Gifts to individual donors and women's organizations

EXAMPLE 4. FUNERAL

Name: Suitua Fililupe
 Church: San Diego Congregational Christian Church
 Date: September, 1979

Background Information

Retired Navy Petty Officer; Ordained Minister Congregational Church of Samoa; Elder San Diego Sub District of Samoan Congregational Churches of USA; Founder First Samoan Congregational Christian Church, San Diego; influential in expansion of Samoan Congregational church in California and State of Washington; member Board of Elders of Congregational Christian Church in Samoa.

CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Samoan Congre. Christian Churches USA	\$ 7,000	
2. Samoan Congre. Christian Churches Hawaii	500	53
3. Samoan Congre. Christian Churches San Diego Sub District	4,000	
4. Other churches	500	
5. Individuals	130	
6. Choirs & other organizations	2,110	
7. First Samoan Congre. Church, San Diego	31,750	510
8. Extended families of Suitua Fililupe	35,200	200
9. Extended families of wife of Suitua Fililupe	3,800	100
TOTAL	\$84,490	863

DISTRIBUTIONS

1. Expenses of funeral
2. Gift to widow of Fililupe
3. Gift to ministers and traditional leaders present
4. Gift to special groups, organizations, choirs, individual donors
5. Gift to guests and friends; extended families of Fililupe and Mrs. Fililupe
6. Gift to helpers and workers

The foregoing examples on page 76-79 illustrate how a Samoan who faithfully practices and maintains the system of mutual obligation is richly rewarded by the lavish contributions of his relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbors whom he/she has helped. These contributions are made not only when something happens to him personally, but also when something happens to his wife, his children, parents, brothers, sisters, and even his in-laws. Contributions are also made in honor of his extended family and the extended family of the wife. There are other examples of the practice of the system of mutual obligation that are much more dramatic and elaborate than the ones stated on pages 76-79.

Of course, in the old days, performance of the system was not as excessively elaborate as today. The improved economic status of individual members contributes much to the extravagant display of material wealth in the maintenance of today's cultural obligations. The tendency of the system toward extravagance arises also out of the improved economic situation of the country.

Perhaps a word must be said about the dynamics involved--why the Samoans tend to be extravagant in the performance of their system of mutual obligation. Let me begin with a contrast.

1. In a Western home, a head count is important to determine the exact number of people who are going to partake in a meal. An estimation of how much each has to eat is also carefully calculated. Westerners, especially the Americans, are very health and weight conscious. The expression "lean American" and advertisements of slim and trim figures emphasize beauty and good health which is culturally

attractive. Thus, the maintenance of moderate and proper eating habits is very important. However, in a Samoan family, when a meal is prepared, provision has to be made for unexpected guests who often drop by either on business, a friendly visit, or just passing the time. It is a disgrace, according to custom, not to invite these guests or friends to partake in family meals. Furthermore, Samoan culture considers big and heavy a sign of good health and wealth. Lean and skinny people are associated with being poor and undernourished. Thus, the larger the person, the more dignified and attractive he or she looks. There is no conscious effort to limit one's intake. A Samoan eats to his heart's content. Therefore, preparation of food must be more than enough.

2. In a Samoan feast, preparation is not made for the enjoyment of the invited guests only. Food is prepared so that the guests can take a good portion of their meal home to be shared with their families.

3. Samoans are culturally trained to serve their leaders and elders well. A good and faithful "tautua" is highly commendable because his position is the stepping stone toward a promotion to titleholder. A good "tautua" proves himself with the kind of contribution he brings to his leader and family.

4. The close and intimate relationship among the people makes their contributions that much more personal and meaningful. Thus, they seek to do their very best for their favorite relatives and friends.

5. The strong feeling of family loyalty, village loyalty and church loyalty are very important to the Samoans. Leaders and members

alike try to live up to the tradition of the family for the sake of its public image and reputation.

6. There are also worldly pride and ego-trips of status-conscious and power-hungry leaders, both traditional and religious. These leaders, in their desire to excel, tend to overtax the resources of their supporters.

It is precisely in category 5 and 6 that the system of mutual obligation is most vulnerable to abuse and misuse by its practitioners, especially the leaders. Leaders tend to be greedy and selfish in the distribution of their families' corporate resources. They tend also to use and take advantage of the faithful "tautua" for their selfish gains.

The system of mutual obligation must be maintained by the Samoans. However, it needs the sensitivity of the leaders, both traditional and religious, in working out ways of preserving the system without posing a burden for the Samoans.

CHAPTER V

THE THEOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

1. Preliminary Statement

The task of this Chapter is to identify some of the teachings of Christian Faith and apply them to the Faasamoa. The purpose of this consideration is twofold. First, if the church is to be successful in her ministry to 20th-century Samoa, she must take seriously her understanding of the Gospel and seek to relate it to the reality in which Samoa now exists. This reality consists of Samoa's basic understanding of human existence as determined by her own cultural heritage, the new changes that have emerged in her social, economic, political, moral and religious life as a result of the influence of modern Western technology, and her insistence on fashioning her cultural, political and religious life under the teachings of Christianity. Secondly, it is extremely important that Samoa understands Christian faith through her own ethnicity, rather than through imported, foreign interpretations of Western Christianity. The Samoans have a better appreciation of the Gospel if they could see it through their own cultural heritage. At the same time they would appreciate their own culture and be proud to affirm it for God's glory in the understanding that even their particular heritage reveals God's design for them. This will provide a new incentive for them to uphold those cultural values dear to their own way of life. Perhaps in this way Samoa can make a meaningful contribution toward the pluralistic culture of the world to which she

belongs.

Hence, the first part of the Chapter will deal with theological teachings of Christian faith relevant to Samoan culture. The second part will treat the specific applications of these teachings to the Faasamoa. The conclusion is an attempt to articulate a tentative program toward a possible Samoan-Christian Theology.

2. The Community and the Individual in the Teachings of the Bible

In the Old Testament, Israel's covenant faith is understood primarily in the relationship between the "One and the Many." This is the relationship in which the "one" is in the "many" and the "many" in the "one." Professor Bernard W. Anderson puts it this way:

"Again and again we have seen that an individual may incarnate the whole community of Israel or, vice versa, the community may be addressed as an individual who stands in direct, personal relation to God."¹

This "one and many" characteristic of Israel's covenant faith discredits any either-or view, that is, either collectivism or individualism. The individualistic-communalistic character of Israel's faith can be clearly demonstrated in the cases of Abraham and the Ebed-Yahweh of Second Isaiah. Abraham was certainly an individual. God appeared to him personally. Yet, according to Professor Anderson, "his biography is also a representation of the whole community of which he is the ancestor. Abraham the man and Abraham the community are inseparably

¹Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament/3rd. ed., (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 461

fused in psychic unity."² In the case of the Ebed-Yahweh of Isaiah 40-55, references to this concept seem to oscillate between the Servant Israel and the personal Servant who would perfectly fulfill Israel's mission in the world. Some scholars believe this personal Servant to be Moses.³

Thus, in the faith of ancient Israel it is difficult to separate the individual from the community with which he/she is identified. The bible believes a person can only become fully human when he/she stands within the community in his/her relationship to God and to his/her neighbor.⁴ Jeremiah spoke against individuals who tried to stand against their own tradition and separated themselves from the covenant of their own people. The prophet was well aware that the individual received his/her healing and salvation in the community.⁵

However, in spite of the real emphasis toward collectivism in the teachings of the Old Testament, there are also numerous references which accentuate the distinctiveness and importance of the individual. Hence, the statement regarding the creation of man in the image of God (Imago Dei) provides the clue that the individual can enter into direct relationship with God (Gen. 1:26; 9:6). The Law which reveals the will of Yahweh for His chosen people speaks directly to the individual and his/her personal responsibility: "Do not commit adultery, murder,

²Ibid., p. 461

³Ibid., p. 462

⁴Ibid., p. 411

⁵Ibid.

steal, etc." This special appeal of the Law to the individual reveals Israel's conviction that the Lawgiver takes seriously the importance of the individual.⁶ We also know that the prophets, despite their strong concern for the collective life of Israel's community as centers around the covenant relationship, are themselves individuals and rigorous individuals, at that. They stand against the accepted norms of their communities and insist that a change of heart and personal repentance are required before Yahweh. Thus Micah speaks:

"To you, O man, goodness is shown; what does God require of you but that you do what is right and just and walk humbly before your God." (6:8)

Hosea also proclaims:

"Therefore, you whom God had helped, return and repent and hold fast to justice and love, and wait for your Lord." (12:6)

If we move to the New Testament, we find in Paul's teaching the emphasis on the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ. However, it is the unity in diversity where each individual member plays an important role. Thus, the apostle Paul speaks of the importance of the way one becomes a Christian and the process of nourishing the spiritual life of that individual into a matured person in the faith. Passages such as:

"If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believed in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9); or

⁶Paul Davies, "Trends toward individualism in the teachings of Jesus" Journal of Bible and Religion, 24 (January, 1956)

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20),

clearly demonstrate how the individual, though an integral part of the Body of Christ--the community--has a distinctive responsibility before God that cannot be taken lightly.

The synoptic gospels are also full of passages in which Jesus directly singles out the individual:

"Your faith has saved you."

"If you wish to follow me, take up your cross and follow me."

"Go and sell all your wealth, then come and follow me."

"If you remain till the end, you will be saved."

"Whoever confesses me before men, I will confess him before God."

"As you do it to the least of these..."

"He who does the will of my Father..."

It is unmistakably clear from the witness of the New Testament that Jesus certainly recognizes the importance of the individual, despite his own preoccupation with the urgency of his own ministry, which is the proclamation of the immediate presence of God's kingdom or the nowness of God's reign in history.

3. The Individual and the Community in Samoan Understanding

Before we attempt a comparison between Christian faith and Samoan thought with respect to the individual and the community, perhaps

it would be proper to say something about the characteristics of the Samoan personality.

The Samoan personality is somewhat similar to the "dyadic personality" of the first century Mediterranean world as reported by Bruce Malina.⁷ His article was based on the studies from the field of Cultural Anthropology by George M. Forster, Henry A. Selby and J. G. Peristiany.

The word dyadic comes from the Greek word "dyadism" which means pair. Dyad in biology is a group of two. Hence, according to Malina's report, a dyadic personality is one that simply needs another, continually, in order to know who he or she is. In other words, this kind of personality always perceives himself or herself as interrelated to other persons both in the horizontal and vertical levels of his/her social position. This analysis of the dyadic personality is very characteristic of the Samoan personality. The Samoan individual is very conscious of his/her social relationship to his/her elders and seniors as well as his/her peers and juniors. See further discussion on the extended family and titleholder on Chapter 3 above.

Malina further mentioned that for such persons, honor and shame are pivotal values.⁸ These values are central to the social world of the Mediterranean from antiquity even to the present time.⁹ In Samoan

⁷ Bruce Malina, "The Individual and the Community-Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity." Biblical Theology Bulletin, 9 (July 1979), 126-138

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

culture the value of honor and shame is of primary importance. Its maintenance is a high priority in any personal, family or community planning strategy. I have already alluded elsewhere in this paper to the fact that the protection and maintenance of personal or family honor can certainly drain one's resources and even lead to losing one's life. Whether it is the honor of the village, church, or family or of an individual as parent, sister, brother or relative, honor is of utmost importance. The shattering of such honor can lead to a major tragedy if reconciliation is not offered immediately in the extreme form of public humiliation known as the "ifoga." It is sensitivity toward shame and humiliation that drives the Samoan personality toward upholding the value of honor at all cost.

A person who sees life almost exclusively in terms of honor and respect is very sensitive to the way others perceive him.¹⁰ Without the others, the individual is lost. It is the significant other that provides and grants the honor and respect the individual needs.¹¹ Thus, the Samoan personality performs for the satisfaction and gratification of the others to maintain its own self-respect and honor. As long as the significant other is pleased and satisfied, its main objective is fulfilled.

Furthermore, the dyadic personality according to Malina's study represents the group rather than the individual. The individual embodies the values of the group to which he/she belongs. At the same

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 129

¹¹ Ibid., p. 128

time, the group shares in the fortune and misfortune of the individual. Thus, the responsibility for morality and deviance is not the sole obligation of the individual but the corporate body in which the individual is embedded.¹² This is true with the Samoan understanding of community ownership. (See discussion on Chapter 3 under the heading of the Extended family and Chapter 4 under the system of mutual obligation).

One other characteristics of the dyadic personality that is very important to point out, according to Malina's report, is that it does not attempt to evaluate people by interiorizing their individualized histories.¹³ The dyadic personality sees the person as a total entity with respect to personal honor. Any evaluation in terms of interior motive is absent. This view of the dyadic personality fits well with Samoan understanding. Samoans do not take seriously one's personal history, but rather the total person as he or she is seen before the public eyes. Looking into the interior of a person's life violates the honor of that person. Samoans tend to say that only God can judge a person for He knows what is in the interior recesses of the person's heart. Hence, the individual does not seem to have any feeling of guilt or sin, as the modern psychological connotations of these words convey. The theological concept of sin is absent in Samoan culture. There is, however, the concept of right and wrong in terms of accepted cultural norms. In place of "sin," we speak of "agasala" (punishable deeds or

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 129

wrong behavior) and "solitulafono" (trespassing the law), the latter being a later rendition of the word "sin" by translators of the Bible into the Samoan language.¹⁴

Hence, the Samoan personality does not inquire into the interior life of a person. The external view of the individual is important and final. For example, a Samoan who has studied overseas and possesses an advanced degree will immediately be viewed as a qualified leader for any kind of responsibility. No further investigation is necessary into the background of the individual or the degree that he possesses. An attempt to confirm the validity of the degree through further recommendations, either from the school or other reliable sources, is superfluous to the Samoan mind. One must be sensitive to the honor and self respect of the individual. This kind of sensitivity is called "vafealoa'i" or "avafatafata." It is the intimate sensitivity to the relationship between personal honors. On many occasions, Samoans have used the importance of the recognition of the "avafatafata" to solve some of their most serious and complex problems.

4. Comparison between Christian Faith and the Faasamoa re: The Individual-Community Construct

Both Christian faith and the Faasamoa recognize the interrelatedness of the individual and the community. Both take seriously the belief that the individual is the integral part of the community and

¹⁴Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language, Malua Printing Press, Western Samoa, Reprinted 1960

vice versa. That is, that the individual represents the values of the community, and the community shares in the values of the individual.

However, they differ in that Christian faith, although it recognizes the importance of each individual, holds the two as equal partners. Christian faith recognizes the solidarity and uniqueness of each, and yet acknowledges that both are under the judgment of God. The Faasamoa emphasizes the community more than the individual. In the Faasamoa, the individual exists to serve the community. The community is primary. Individual differences and uniqueness are not recognized if they tend to stand over against the community. The Faasamoa tends to mold the individual for the purpose of carrying out the values and goals of the community.

Because of the tendency of the Faasamoa to standardize the individual, there are no really outstanding or rigorous individuals in Samoan society. Everybody is kept within the limits as prescribed by the community. An individual who tends to step out of line and ignore the community ostracizes himself by his own act of non-conformity, and to alienate oneself from the community is something very difficult to do in Samoan society because of the intimacy of its personal and family relationships.

The importance of the function of the community should not be minimized. In primitive society, this is necessary for the survival and security of the individual. However, with the coming of modern technology, many individuals do not feel complete dependence upon the community for security. Individual freedom is beginning to exert more pressure upon the authority and influence of the community. Thus, if

the community insists on the inviolability of its authority, it will soon lose its grip as well as all the values which it dearly holds. Perhaps this is where Christian faith can help the Faasamoa to recognize the importance of the individual as an individual within its cultural matrix. The bible is clear in its teaching about the importance of the individual. Samoan understanding has idealized if not idolized the Faasamoa. The Faasamoa is also under the judgement of God. I believe if the Faasamoa takes seriously the teaching of the Bible with respect to the individual, and works out a system whereby both the individual and community are held in proper tension without jeopardizing the validity of each, the Faasamoa has a better chance of surviving the changes of the modern world and will be appreciated more by its own practitioners.

I will try to say more about the relationship between the individual and the community under the subheading "Authority."

5. Radical Obedience

One of the main concepts in the religion of the Old Testament is the idea of obedience. This idea is centered around the Old Testament concept of the covenant.¹⁵ It is through Israel's obedience to her moral and religious responsibilities, as required and demanded by God's justice, that the validity of the covenant is established and substantiated.¹⁶ However, even though the prophets stressed the

¹⁵Rudolf Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," in Claus Westermann (Ed) Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 59

¹⁶Ibid.

importance of obedience as a basic ingredient to validating the covenant relationship, this has in no way endangered or rendered useless their own individual freedom to make personal decisions.¹⁷ Thus, the prophet Isaiah was not directly called by Yahweh, yet, when he heard the question put forth by Yahweh to the heavenly council which he was permitted to attend, "Who will go for them?" Isaiah responded out of his own free will: "Here am I! Send me" (Is. 6:8). Although the prophet Jeremiah rejected Yahweh's call at first, he decided at the end to obey God's command. Jeremiah's obedience was not without challenging the reasonableness of Yahweh's call.¹⁸ In other words, the prophet's obedience was not blind obedience. Prophetic obedience is rendered with one's full awareness of one's personal autonomy and authenticity. Hence, Jeremiah did not surrender his freedom, but rather "used it to render a unique obedience" to Yahweh, which on that occasion almost led him to the verge of blasphemy.¹⁹

When we come to the religion of later Judaism, the interpretation of the idea of obedience is quite different from that of the prophets.

The strict understanding of obedience as blanket acceptance of the formal authority of Scripture and as binding to man without reference to its content was reinterpreted by Jesus in one of his sayings:

¹⁷Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), II, 71

¹⁸Jeremiah 1:4-8

¹⁹Rad, p. 75.

"It was said of old, but I say to you" (Matthew 5:21-48). Jesus looks at the external structure of the commandment and interprets it according to its intrinsic meaning.²⁰ Bultmann argues that the intrinsic requirements of God's command is quite intelligible for man to see and to obey. However, according to Bultmann, obedience is something which man cannot do by himself. It is only possible when one stands under the authority of God that one is able to see God's will and respond to it wholeheartedly without losing one's freedom and authenticity.²¹

Both the ethics of Jesus and Jewish morality center around the concept of obedience. However, Jesus reinterprets obedience as a renewal of the tradition of the prophets by recognizing personal freedom as well as introducing the element of eschatological urgency for personal decision under the authority of God.²²

6. Authority as Power/Force

The concept of authority is basic and fundamental in Samoan culture. The whole orientation of the Faasamoa is toward respect and obedience of the authority of traditional and religious leaders. In fact, the reason why Christianity was readily accepted by the Samoans was because of their respect for and obedience to the authority of their cultural leaders. However, this blind obedience to the authority of Samoan leaders, whether cultural, religious, civil or the authority of

²⁰Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and The Word. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 66f.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 72-86.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 77.

elders and parents is being challenged in present day Samoa.

There is a tendency to confuse the word authority as power and authority as force. Dr. Webster defines force as power to effect any physical change in relations and conditions. Authority is a legal power exercised by a person by virtue of his office or trust. However, Professor Helmut Thielicke gives a helpful illustration of the use of authority as power and as force.

According to Thielicke's analysis, authority uses the power of persuasion whereas force uses the power of compulsion. Hence, force is sheer strength used without consideration of the object. There is no relationship between force and object. Thus, force as power seeks to win people by brute strength. This use of power as force violates the freedom and autonomy of a person. It degrades and reduces people to mere objects.

However, authority as power, according to Thielicke, is very conscious of its relationship to the object over which it exercises its power. Such authority uses the power of persuasion to achieve its goal. This use of authority does not violate the freedom and self-respect of a person. When authority can be maintained without destroying personal autonomy, this is true authority. Thielicke further claims that the holder of genuine authority is apparent when that power is supported by personal freedom, loyalty, confidence and autonomy.²³

The relationship between authority and autonomy is very crucial.

²³ Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), II, 180-194

There is a false understanding that in order to have true authority one "must surrender at least part of his sovereignty." True authority can be acknowledged only when there is true autonomy, for authority always insists upon autonomy.²⁴ It is not the goal of authority to destroy autonomy. Both authority and autonomy, according to Thielicke, stand on the same level and are judged by the same authority that transcends both of them.²⁵ Hence, the superiority of authority does not depend on force to reduce people to immaturity and dependency by stripping them of their personhood. Rather, its superiority rests upon the willingness of authority to respect and honor one's freedom in order that maturity and independent thinking may take place, and that subjects willingly and freely consent to render total surrender in the service of authority with full confidence and trust.²⁶

Thus, in looking to the Bible for evidence of the authoritarian power of God, we find that God's power "is not capricious," neither "heteronomous."²⁷ That is, God's power is not arbitrarily imposed by blind force. God's power seeks after autonomy and tries to lead people to be mature, responsible and independent individuals.²⁸ God's authority "expresses the innermost and deepest law of our being."²⁹

²⁴ Ibid., II, 179f.

²⁵ Ibid., II, 180.

²⁶ Ibid., II, 191.

²⁷ Gordon D. Kaufman, "The Ground of Biblical Authority: Six Theses," Journal of Bible and Religion. 24 (January, 1956), 27

²⁸ Thielicke, II, 179-180.

²⁹ Kaufman, p. 27.

Therefore, to accept God's authority does not mean one has to give up one's own freedom and autonomy. It is true that there are legalistic traditions that uphold the omnipotence of God's authority to do what He pleases. For instance, there is the tradition in Jeremiah of a Potter and the clay. This tradition and interpretation of the authority of God does not seem to fit the teaching of the gospels. God is not a tyrant in the image of the Potter who exercises force as power to shape whatever forms he prefers upon the powerless clay. However, God is seen more in the image of the loving father of Luke 15. Despite his son's bullheaded decision to leave home, squander his inheritance and ruin his family's reputation; yet, had a royal reception to express his joy when the son returned, for after all, the persuasive power of his authority had ultimately prevailed. God's authority uses the power of persuasion to accomplish its purpose in the world.

John Cobb writes, "the only power capable of any worthwhile result is the power of persuasion."³⁰ The God of the New Testament, writes Professor Cobb, is the God that invites and calls us forward:

"Instead of seeing the reality revealed in Jesus in terms of a predetermined concept of transcendent and omnipotent deity, we must reinterpret deity in the light of what is given us in Jesus. That means that the Creator-Lord of history is not the all determinative cause of the course of natural and historical events, but a lover of the world who calls it ever beyond what it has attained by affirming life, novelty, consciousness and freedom again and again."³¹

³⁰John B. Cobb, Jr., God and the World. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 90.

³¹Ibid., p. 65.

God uses the power of persuasion to call "us beyond all that we have become to what we might be." God's authority rests solely upon His power of persuasion rather than the use of force.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As previously stated, the primary focus of this project is an attempt to clarify and relate Samoan cultural values to Christian understanding. The author affirms that Samoan culture can be appreciated more fully by its own people as well as others when it is understood in its biblical and theological relevance to present day thinking. Furthermore, it is only in the light of the culture's theological relevance that the ministry and work of the church will have any meaningful significance to present day Samoa.

Unfortunately, there exists a great gap between the present generations of Samoans in their attitudes toward their culture. The new breed leans more toward rejecting traditional ways that are vital to the lifeblood of the culture. This unfortunate attitude is evident in statements such as:

When my parents pass away, I am
not going to contribute or observe
any of the traditional customs they
were obligated to keep.¹

This attitude stems from a misunderstanding on the part of younger Samoans concerning the proper practice and use of the culture. There is a tendency by older people to abuse the culture for their own selfish gain and prestige seeking. This had led the younger generation

¹This is the reaction related to the author by several young Samoans during the course of this research in areas like San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco where the majority of Samoans are concentrated.

to regard the culture as something offensive and revolting.²

Hence, in these concluding remarks, I shall refer briefly to some of the Samoan cultural values and their possible theological implications.

1. Theological Implications of Samoan Myths

In the myth of "Tupufia,"³ each member of the godhead had a particular responsibility in creation. But it was in the creation of the first human being that all three worked together. The importance of man, perhaps, needed their collaboration and concerted effort.

Thus, man was fashioned after the imprint of the god Tagaloa Faatupunu'u, designer of the first human being. Through the power of Tagaloa Mana, the all-powerful god, man became a living thing. Man differs from other forms of living things because of the higher form of life given to him by Tagaloa Lagi, god of the cosmos. Hence, the myth gives a special place for man separate from the world of nature. The myth also implies a concept of the trinity. "Tupufia" meaning three-king is a being with three names performing different functions in the world of creation.

Regarding the myth of the "'alu'alutoto" (blood clot), man is seen as a product of nature. He stands at the pinnacle of nature's developmental process. There is close affinity between humankind and nature. The myth implies that there is no divine spark in man. The

²See discussion on pages 70-75 for a clear understanding of this argument.

³"Tupu" is king and "fia" is three in old Samoan.

supreme deity did not instruct "miti" to breathe into the nostrils of the embryo, but to suck out the life that is potentially there. This implies that nature has a life of its own. However, its life is subject to the power of the gods. This illustrates the fact that man is not self-sufficient. He is a dependent being. He depends upon nature and upon the gods to realize his full humanhood.

One of the motifs in biblical theology is that of God seeking after man. The "'alu'alutoto" myth speaks of the supreme deity finding man floating lifelessly upon the sea of time, taking and nursing him until he achieves his full humanhood.

It is also quite significant that the first human being was named after the gods, Tagaloa Ui (Walking god). Although man's origin is in nature, his destiny is to have fellowship with the gods. In his human existence he must fashion his life after the fashion of the gods.

2. Importance of the Extended Family

The Samoan extended family can be compared to the church as the family of God. It is a corporate body consisting of different individuals, related through blood, marriage or adoption, who have particular roles, responsibilities and privileges within the bounds of the family. Their security, identity and dignity are protected and maintained through their participation and involvement in the life of the family. Thus they serve the extended family with pride and dedication as a devoted church member serving the church and her Lord Jesus Christ. As all good members of the extended family performing their duties well in the service (tautua) of their aliis, they also relate well in

performing their service of tautua to Christ, the alii sili of the church.

The congenial relationship that exists between the Samoans and their aliis is easily transferred to the pastor-parishioner relationship in which the pastor is regarded with high honor in the Samoan community. Oftentimes a pastor would feel very small because of his unworthiness to deserve such high respect from his people or the community.

Thus, the Samoans find it easy to understand the authority of Christ over the church because of the authority of the matai over the extended family.

The theological implication of the function of the extended family has already been discussed as group salvation. This is the function of the church as a fellowship of believers seeking to bring the benefits of Christ's teaching to bear upon the world.

Through their relationships to the extended family, Samoans learn the importance of sharing and participating in each other's lives. Thus, selfish accumulation of material things for one's enjoyment is not a major aim of the Samoans. However, it is the enjoyment of life in the personal and social levels that they value most.

3. The Ideal Matai

The important role of the extended family as an agent for the salvation of the community requires an ideal leader for its administration and management. Such a leader needs those admirable qualities as discussed on pages 25 through 29. The point is clear that an ideal

matai is a true Christian by heart. A person who sees himself as a servant of the gospel of Christ. As one outstanding layman of the Congregational Christian Church of Lalomalava, Savaii puts it: "A matai must have the heart and soul of a true minister of God."

One of the pitfalls that often endanger the work of the matai is preoccupation with power and prestige. However, a matai who rules his extended family according to Christian principles knows that his authority is neither absolute nor independent of the authority of God. He knows that he himself stands under the same judgement as other members of his family. He knows that the authority of God is not that of a tyrant, but that of a father whose persuasive love ultimately captures the heart of a rebellious son as in the parable of the two brothers.

4. Parental Authority

The basic foundation of the extended family is the biological family. And the basic factor in the maintenance of the cohesiveness of the biological family is parental control. The breakdown of parental control will ultimately endanger the survival of the extended family, for those who finally end up serving the extended family are members who have been trained and raised in the environment of the biological family.

Thus, with the breakdown in the family, due to the generation gap and the confusion of roles in modern society, it is therefore vital that parental authority be restored to its proper place within the family setting. However, parental authority must be guided by

christian principles and theological presuppositions.

Parents must realize they do not own the children as one owns a piece of furniture. Parents are guardians and custodians of God's most valuable gifts to the world. Thus, parents treating their children harshly because of their demand for respect are not justified under Christian teaching of love that is patient and kind. Demanding blanket obedience without question is the surest way for parents to lose the respect of their children.

Parents should act as counselors and close companions to their children. Some parents have the false impression that their children will not respect them if they are too close and open with them.

5. Fostering the Spirit of Individualism

Since Samoan culture has already possessed a well-developed system of community in the extended family, it therefore needs a place for rigorous individuals to maintain the balance between the two. It is a fact that, without rigorous individuals, progression and advancement in any community is stultified.

Samoan thinking seems to uphold the idea that the individual finds his/her ultimate fulfillment by losing himself/herself completely in the community. Individual uniqueness, as such, is unimportant. However, Christian teaching maintains the proper balance and tension between the individual and the community. In the last analysis, individual uniqueness and identity are retained even in the presence of God. This is the witness of biblical faith.

6. Land as a Gift of God

The Samoan understanding of the land as a heritage given to the extended family is fairly close to the Old Testament concept of the land as a gift of God to the people of Israel to use and cultivate.

In the Samoan system, land is communally owned. No one individual can claim land to be his/her own. The land is for the security and benefit of the community through individual and corporate efforts.

7. Prestige and Honor

One of the most important values of Samoan society is honor and prestige. This value is not unique with the Samoans. It is a positive value with other societies, too. One must have honor and pride in oneself, otherwise one can easily fall prey to a distorted view of life.

However, it is in the overemphasis upon prestige and honor that one's sense of perspective is rendered out of proportion. Christian teaching about self-regard can help put the concern for prestige and honor in its proper place.

8. Recommendation

Most cultural values of the Samoans are not very different from values of other cultures. The only difference lies in the weight the Samoans place upon these values in their daily practice.

The author believes that those who are in the best position to help preserve the best in Samoan cultural values are traditional leaders, religious leaders and parents.

Traditional leaders must take seriously their responsibility as God's emissaries and custodians of the Samoan culture. The parents must realize the importance of their role in helping their children to take pride in their culture. And religious leaders have the task of introducing Christian principles to help the traditional leaders and parents perform their duties well in maintaining the best of their culture in the family and the community.

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